




J. COMYNS CARR



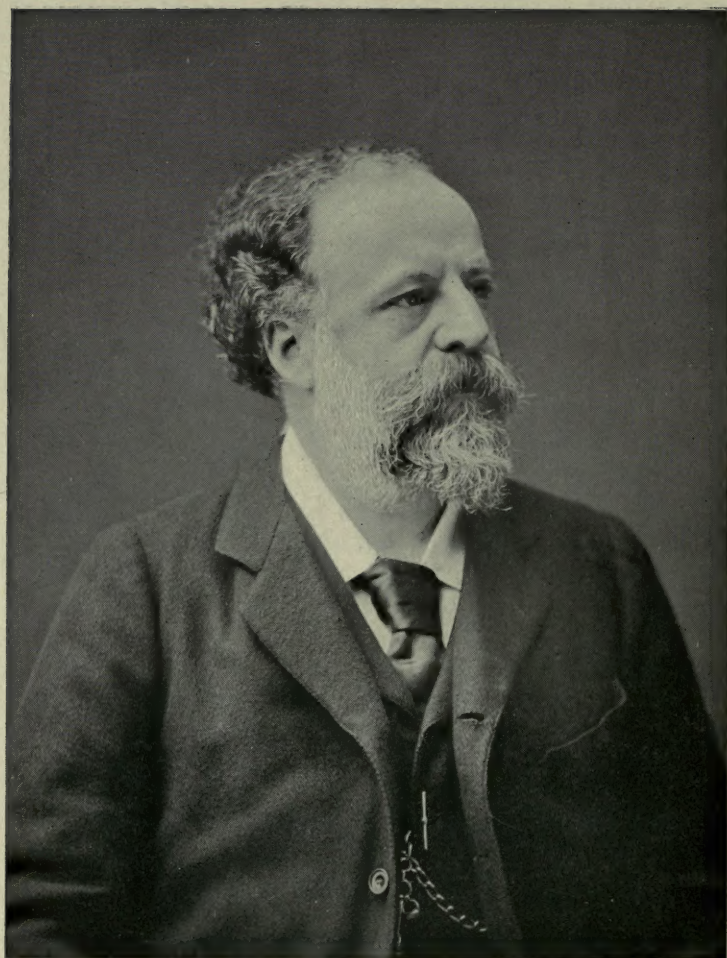
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J. COMYNS CARR

Stray Memories

BY

HIS WIFE

Alice Vansittart Carr



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TO
OUR GRANDSONS
RICHARD AND JOHN COMYNS CARR

FOREWORD

My husband wrote his own Reminiscences in his two books—*Some Eminent Victorians* and *Coasting Bohemia*, and it might justly be brought up against me that I could have nothing to add to what he has said himself.

But a critic remarked at the time that there were few "Reminiscences" in which the pronoun "I" occurred so seldom; and it is upon this ground that I venture to take my stand.

His friends meant so much to him that his talk is all of them. But they also loved him, and the few who are left among those of whom he wrote, as well as the many more of the younger generation who testify to-day to the exhilaration of his presence and the tonic of his humour may, I hope, find in my effort something which may recall to them his urbane and inspiring personality.

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Frontispiece

J. COMYNS CARR

From a photograph by the London Stereoscopic Co. Ltd.

CHAPTER I

COURTSHIP

It was in June of the year 1873 that I first saw my husband.

Aimée Desclée was beginning a memorable season of French Plays at the Royalty Theatre, and it was in the capacity of dramatic critic to *The Echo*—a post to which he had recently been appointed—that “Joe Carr,” as his friends called him, sat awaiting the curtain to rise on that remarkable performance of *Frou-Frou* which set the cosmopolitan world of London aflame in its day.

He was twenty-four years of age ; but he looked more, for though he had the complexion almost of a girl and that unruly twist in his fair, curling hair which belongs to early youth, he was broad-shouldered and had the strong build of the Cumberland statesmen from whom he was as proud to claim ancestry on his father’s side as he was of the Irish blood that came to him from his mother.

Not that I could have described him that evening : the stalls were too ill lit and my excitement over the play was too great.

I had but lately arrived from Italy—having

cajoled my father, then English chaplain at Genoa, into letting me "see London" under the care of my brother, resident there; so that I had just been shot from the socially restricted life of a parson's daughter in the small English colony of a small foreign town into the comparative Bohemianism of the artistic set in the London of that day best described by my husband himself in the introduction to his book *Coasting Bohemia*.

There was much that must have been, unconsciously to myself, of rare educational advantage in the lovely scenery and picturesque surroundings of my childhood's life on the Riviera and in the Apennines; and my parents so loved both Nature and Art that they gave us constant change of opportunity in these directions. Yet I must confess that as I grew up, the chestnut groves of the Apennines and the shores of the blue Mediterranean became empty joys to me, and even the comparative excitement of wearing my own and criticizing my friends' frocks in the Public Gardens of Genoa or the keener delight of an occasional dance in a stately palace, was insufficient to fill my cravings; and I longed for freedom and the attractions of the world—more especially in London, which I only knew through visits to relatives during the holidays of a short period of my life at a Brighton school. And it was from the house of specially strict relatives that I definitely escaped that evening, to come to the wicked French play with my brother and his friend and housemate, Mr. Frederick Jameson, an architect by profession, but incidentally a distinguished

musician—in later years the translator of the Wagner libretti.

Mr. Comyns Carr, to whom they introduced me, sat behind us ; and, though he often told me that he marked me down as I came in, and somehow associated me with the personality of Aimée Desclée herself, I took small heed of him then, and when, as we sought a cab at the close of the performance, he volunteered to go back and search for a valueless brooch which I had lost, I did not have the grace to insist on waiting for his return before we hurried off.

But I was not to be punished ; that very incident furnished occasion for a next meeting.

Through my brother he tracked me to a Bloomsbury boarding-house, whereto insubordination to the deserved reproof of the conventional relatives had made me condemn myself.

Oh, that boarding-house—with the city clerk's *bon mot*, " Why are you like the spoon resting in your tea ? " And the spinster convinced that the Italian Stornelli I sang in the evening must be " improper ! " Could I have endured it if Mr. Jameson and my brother had not started the glorious idea of theatricals in their rooms hard by in Great Russell Street ? And if, on the second day of my sojourn, the lodging-house slavey had not burst into the wee bedroom looking out to the backyard where I was putting on my hat, with the news that a gentleman was asking for me at the front door ?

I never guessed who it was, but, through the sunshine that struck into the dingy hall, I saw a strong

figure on the door-step and, as I advanced out of the dimness, a mouth hidden in a fair beard—thick and long according to the fashion of the hour—parted in a smile ; then I recognised the young man whom I had seen two nights ago at the play.

He had brought my lost brooch, but I don't think the excuse was needed. I knew why he had come, though at the moment an unwonted shyness had fallen on me, and I think I did not know whether to be pleased or frightened.

He said, " Mayn't I come in ? "

And I recollect my vexation as I answered, " There's nowhere to come to ! The drawing-room is full of old ladies—the sort who tell one that a waterproof and an umbrella are the safe dress for a girl in London."

How he laughed ! the laugh that many knew and loved him for : and any who recollect the speckled-hen variety of the waterproof of the seventies will not wonder.

Then he said : " But you are going out. Which way are you going ? "

My reply so well betrayed utter ignorance of London thoroughfares that his next remark was natural.

" Well, as I know you're a stranger, I won't say you've a small bump of locality ! " he said. And how often did he say it again in after years ! " But you had better let me take you along. I'm going that way."

He told the lie unblushingly—and unblushing I did as he bade me and followed him into the street.

I had been brought up with the strictness not

only of my father's cloth but of Italian customs, and I felt I was doing a bold thing : in those days my whole English adventure was considered bold by Mrs. Grundy, and my poor father had already come over on a hasty visit from Italy to place me with those relatives from whom I had escaped ; but on that occasion I was simply overborne. Long afterwards, at a crush where Royalty was present, my husband won a bet that he would sup in the Royal room merely by the way in which he bade the footman drop the dividing red rope, and by the same way of bidding a porter put his valise on a cab, he won another with J. L. Toole as to his luggage passing unexamined on a return from abroad. So it was by some kindred " way " that he led me forth that day—whither I knew not. And honestly, I forget where we went. I only knew that he took me a long way—in more senses than one—and showed me many things that were new and told me many that were more Greek to me than I chose to admit at the time.

I was an ignorant girl—the smattering of a brief boarding-school education counting probably far less than the companionship of refined parents in a land of beauty, and of the sort of cultivation in which Joe lived and revelled I knew absolutely nothing.

I don't know that, at that stage in my career, I ever had so much desire to learn as I pretended—and I am not sure that Joe cared.

Yet he was in those days of his youth at the height of his enthusiasm on matters of Art ; he had just written those articles on living painters—

specially noting the so-called Pre-Raphaelites—which had drawn considerable notice to his pseudonym of “Ignotus,” and he was, at the moment, one of Rossetti’s favoured young admirers.

But I knew nothing of all this ; nor of his having already begun his career of a “wit” as Junior of the Bar on the Northern Circuit. In fact, what I recall of him then is not his wit but his tenderness. He was the ardent pursuer, the first man I had met with whom I was afraid to flirt, because—in spite of some tremulousness in his eager insistence—there was something that said : “I mean to succeed.”

So I stood dreaming before the masterpieces of the National Gallery, and he, I am bound to say, was content with much silence as we sat in the large, cool rooms on that hot May day.

Later on, when he was showing me what to admire, I would tease him by pointing to some atrocity in Art, and say : “That is what I really like.” But not that day.

And when the hour came for me to return to the boarding-house, I think his sole thought was upon the contriving of our next meeting. As we passed the British Museum—he looked up at the windows of my brother’s rooms facing it, and said : “Sheridan Knowles’ ‘Hunchback,’ you said.”

“Yes,” I replied. “And I do Julia and Mr. Jameson Master Walter. But it may all fall through because he can’t find a man for the lover. It is desolating.”

I can recall the slow look he gave me ; but then he smiled and said : “Is that what you would say in your foreign tongues ?”

I got cured of such expressions later on, but that day I think I was ashamed of my careless speech, for I knew better ; and I shook hands with him with a sense of disappointment as the slavey opened the door into the dingy brown hall. Had I been too flippant and free to please such a clever man ?

That evening, however, when I went to the rehearsal in Great Russell Street, Mr. Comyns Carr was there ; of course he had offered himself to play that lover's part. He was busy enough—though not so busy as he had been before I knew him, when reading for his Law Scholarship at the London University. He had, in fact, if I remember rightly, just returned from his first experience on the Northern Circuit and was beginning to supplement his earnings at the Bar by literary efforts. But he was not too busy for this adventure, and there followed three weeks of rehearsals under Mr. Jameson's management, during which my assets for the stage were calmly discussed, Mr. Jameson declaring that they were good, and finally winning my brother's consent to the bidding of his theatrical friends—John Hare among them—to decide the question.

But Joe always pooh-poohed the notion.

And when I said : “ Well, I'm going to earn enough to keep me in London somehow. I'm not going back to that dead-alive life at home ! ” he only said cryptically, “ There are other ways.”

I think I was a bit huffed at the time and crowed when a lightly spoken word of praise came to me presently from a very authoritative quarter.

For one day, as we sat resting from our labours

in one of the window seats of the beautiful Adams room where Burne-Jones had once painted and that Whistler had not long left, a light rap fell on the door and a voice long loved by us all called out : " Anybody at home ? " as the radiant face of Ellen Terry peeped merrily in upon us.

There was little work done that day ; but our stage manager, whose old friend she was, bade me speak one of my speeches, and she said : " A good carrying voice, and she finishes her words." No merit to me, who had been bred in a land where folk open their throats and where I had heard cultivated English only ; but I was naturally flattered and, when " the night " came and I was awkward and terrified and John Hare smiled pleasant nothings and my kindly, ambitious stage-manager's ardour was damped, I might have been sore cast down but that a new excitement and glamour had flashed into my life.

Joe Carr's " way " was carving its straight course.

Many a time I had been caught wandering aimlessly up Gower Street pretending a shopping excursion and swearing that I had not seen him on the opposite pavement, and many a half-hour had we both pretended to enjoy the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum, but in truth it was only three weeks after that theatrical performance when I put my key one day into the door of the Dispensary over which were those historic rooms and felt rather than saw a figure behind me, and knew that the great moment had come for me and that I was to be carried off my feet.

As once before he said : " May I come in ? "

And I answered nothing and left the key in the door (of which I never heard the end), and he followed me up to the big studio where we were to spend the first year of our wedded life.

I had come there that day for a singing lesson from Mr. Jameson and, when he returned presently, I am sure he guessed no more than we did that in four months he would be in America and would have rented his rooms to us for our first home.

CHAPTER II

THE HOME OF BOYHOOD

So from that day there was no more dingy boarding-house for me : my betrothed took me to his parents' house at Clapham, where I well remember the courtly words : " I hear I have to congratulate my son Joe " with which I was received by his father.

Small blame would it have been to parents, ambitious for the advancement of their children, had they only seen in me a foreign adventuress without credentials coming to snatch one of the flowers of their flock ; yet instead of that, most generously was I welcomed to a home of which I have never seen the like ; and if sometimes bewildered and always non-plussed by the free-and-easy give and take and the wonderful argumentative capacity of that large and variously gifted family—I felt out of it—my lover was always unobtrusively protecting, and the artist-sister who had always shared his tastes and sympathized with his ambitions, often held out a kindly hand to help me up the steep places.

But they were few : the sunny places, full of real romance, of utter confidence in our future—

rash as it might appear to prudent elders—bright with his radiant enthusiasms and his fine ambitions, are the things that cannot fade from my memory.

In those days much verse was written not then intended for publication, but some of which has seen the light since.

The typical gathering, of the large family, presided over by the wise father whose "Landmarks, boys"! from the head of the table generally calmed any storm, was most often one of obstinate argument and fierce word-fights, and stands out now as the proper school where the keen critical faculty and the gift of ready repartee for which many friends now remember Joe Carr, were first forged and perfected.

And, be it noted, that however sanguinary the fight, there was never any malice, never any after ill-will among the combatants: generous natures and a Celtic sense of humour prevented that—not a little helped by the complete freedom of arena left by the parents.

The mother ruled her household as Victorian mothers did, and spared neither pains nor expense for her son's ambitions and her daughters' proper advancement in the world; she welcomed their friends with courteous Irish welcome, however little many of their tastes might be in harmony with her own; but she let them talk unmolested and was content to keep her own counsel, while she ministered lavishly to their creature comforts; and the father—a man of few words but of strong character and clear insight—kept his own views undisturbed. He had nevertheless more deeply,

though probably unconsciously, impressed them on his children, than his children then guessed. He was a broad Liberal, and it is interesting to note that, in days when we were even more insular than we are now, no fighter in the cause of freedom was forbidden his house because he was a foreigner. Under the auspices of Mr. Adam Gielgud—the son of a great Polish refugee—patriots from many lands who had sought our shelter, found their way to that hospitable roof. Pulski and Riciotti Garibaldi are the only other names that recur to me, but there were more and they were all welcome. Men of after note in the art world and in journalism came also as friends of Joe's or of his sisters'—shaken together with charming Irish and hard-headed North country cousins.

Many were the times when dinner had been ordered for six, and sixteen would sit down at the long mahogany table, the polishing of which Mrs. Carr supervised daily, laden with homely but abundant fare.

But Joe made many other friends in town who never found time to visit Clapham. In spite of his recent appointment as dramatic critic to *The Echo* his new friends were less among actors than among painters—Burne-Jones and perhaps chiefest just then, Rossetti, whose friendship he describes himself in *Some Eminent Victorians*. Nevertheless he had met Henry Irving through the son of the Lyceum manager, Mr. Bateman, and had often passionately praised him.

To the girl fresh from the small English colony abroad it was all vastly entertaining, though I did

not realize then how much of a figure my betrothed already was among the men of his time. Even the gayer part of my girlhood—the summers spent at S. Moritz, which my father had discovered, as a homely village in his yearly Alpine tramp—bore little resemblance to London excitements. I had but rarely seen the inside of a theatre and never a fine English actor, and my first vision of Henry Irving in “The Bells,” is a haunting memory still.

This was in July, 1873.

But this engrossing first season of mine had to be interrupted; for Joe, having at last obtained a commission from one of the dailies for holiday articles which would bring in a sum just sufficient to pay his expenses, was whirled off to the Engadine by my brother to be introduced to my parents as my suitor.

In some ways a strange meeting on both sides: to Joe the restrictions of a parson's home—though greatly modified by the manner of a foreign life—must have seemed a contrast to the methodical yet easy-going Clapham household; to my parents the reckless courage of my lover's plan of life, his bold enthusiasms and gay self-confidence must have been—to my father, at all events—somewhat startling. But my brother was a bit of an autocrat in the family circle and knew the position which Joe was likely to win in the London world of letters; my sister, a very young girl, kept the ball rolling merrily on the lighter side, while my mother quickly discovered deep points of sympathy with her would-be son-in-law, and the two would sit on the terrace

of our mountain home, looking on the green lake with the snow-capped peaks cleaving an indigo sky, and quote Wordsworth contentedly. To the end of her life they understood one another ; but even my father came to recognise the value of a fine character above creeds. Certain it is that Joe was as much pleased with the Italian cooking of the maid who sat on the sofa with the dish in her hands while waiting for him to ask for a second helping, as he was surprised at my brother advising him not to borrow a postage stamp when five minutes later my father proposed to settle a small yearly sum upon me which would enable us to marry as soon as Joe had any fixed income whatsoever.

As often later, his personality had won, his incurable optimism and self-confidence had inspired the confidence of my parents, and it was not misplaced. They made the speedy marriage which, he insisted, could alone lead him to success, just possible : economy and courage did the rest—the courage which never forsook him. For as I look over his letters—written to me in later years when some one of his many bold ventures had not succeeded like another—I find the cheerful phrase recurring : “ Don’t be afraid ; there’s a lot of fight left in me yet.”

Upon that—safest and most enduring of all incomes—we set sail without a vestige of misgiving upon the sea of life ; and I’m thankful to say that I never was “ afraid.”

But it was this early marriage that led Joe for a second time, as he tells in his *Reminiscences*, to change his profession, and gradually, and to the

distress of his legal friends, to forsake the Bar for the more immediately remunerative work of literature. I well recollect his joyful announcement to me of his appointment as Art Critic to the *Pall Mall Gazette*—the beginning of a long period of many-sided association with Frederick Greenwood; and that slender certainty of income provided the condition imposed by my father: our wedding day was fixed.

CHAPTER III

MARRIAGE

WE were married in Dresden, where my father had taken a temporary chaplaincy.

Joe had a merry journey out from England with Mr. Jameson and a gentle but less intellectual friend who was to act as best man.

I was told later of this friend's innocent boast of conversion to free thought and of Joe's quick reply : " Why, then, you'll have plenty of time to think." But this sterner remark was not in his usual vein, and much oftener I think he pleased his two friends by his immediate sympathy with free foreign manners, most especially those of the French, who always had the first place in his affections as contrasted with " bulgy-necked Germans whose poverty-stricken tongue " forced them to call a thimble a " finger hat " and a glove a " hand-shoe," and decreed that three men must order their baths as " drei." I must add in his defence that he never could speak or read the language ; it was his mother wit that pulled him through difficulties. Once when alone in Dresden he was driven to ask his way in the words of a well-known song and, even at that

time, was probably set down as an insolent Englishman for the intimate pronoun in his "Kennst du das Sidonien Strasse" ?

What treatment would he receive now and how would he take it ?

But his two friends were German scholars and good cicerones, and led him safely to the Hotel de Saxe on the morning of December 15th, 1873, where my father married us in the presence of a newly arrived British ambassador.

There was some obvious raillery, to which Joe nimbly responded, in consequence of that plenipotentiary remarking, with grim humour, that he wondered if these marriages were really valid ; but the gentleman took the best precautions available in requiring the legal part of the ceremony to take place on the " British ground " of his small, temporary hotel room, and there, both of us kneeling on two little sofa cushions, the ring was put upon my finger.

My father, however, naturally wanted to " finish us off " in the English Church, and I remember my shyness when I saw the uninvited crowd which had assembled there—I was told afterwards to see what a high-art wedding dress would be like !

Joe declared that they expected it to be scanty ; if so they must have been disappointed that the folds of my soft brocade, fashioned after my artist sister-in-law's design and approved by my husband, were much more ample than was the mode of the day.

How much have we changed since the Morris vogue !

I don't think I minded then being the centre of observation, even though I may have guessed it was fraught with adverse criticism—not wholly, as I now think, undeserved.

But in the friendly little party that assembled in our modest home to wish us God-speed there was no adverse criticism, and we went off to Leipzig for our honeymoon *en route* for England and work, without any of the fatiguing excitement of a society assembly.

Joe's graceful little speech in reply to congratulations was quite the merriest note of the simple festivities.

I daresay the wine at that table was not wholly worthy of the palate for which Joe had already acquired a reputation among his London friends ; but when we reached Leipzig I remember his ordering a bottle of the celebrated Johannesberg for our wedding dinner. Possibly he may have told a sympathetic *bon viveur* of this afterwards ; anyhow our first dinner invitation on our return to London was to the house of a wealthy bachelor who produced a bottle of the (ostensibly) same wine with the dessert. Unluckily, Joe, on being pressed to praise it, said with his usual candour : “ Well, my dear fellow, you gave us such excellent claret during dinner that you have spoiled my palate for this ! ”

The laugh that followed compensated for an ominous frown on the brow of our rather peppery host, who was however placated by one of the guests recalling an occasion on which Joe had mortified the famous proprietor of a famous eating-house by forcing him to admit a mistake in serving, later in

the dinner, an inferior brand of the wine supplied at first.

Two days of lazy sight-seeing in the fine old German town, and then on we travelled; and a cold journey we had of it! But Joe's spirits were equal to every *contre-temps*: even when we were turned out at a dreary frontier junction in the middle of the night to await a slow train, although we had paid first class fare and had been told there was no change.

There was but one other passenger in the train—a quiet, elderly German, and when I translated to Joe the bullying official's assurance that this gentleman had agreed to waive his rights if we did the same, he made me ask our fellow-traveller if this was the case. Unwarily the gentleman admitted that he had been told the same thing of us, and although I was unable to put all the epithets which Joe applied to the lying official into colloquial German, I was buoyed up to persuade the traveller to use some of them, with the result that a special engine and first class carriage took us all three on to Paris by the morning. Perhaps our unknown companion was a person in power.

But in Paris fresh delays awaited us. When after two arduous but cheerful days of some sight-seeing and a good deal of aimless and delightful wandering and strange but equally pleasant meals in tiny restaurants—we came to the Gare du Nord on our last day, Joe found that he had not money enough to pay for tickets and luggage, and we were obliged to return ignominiously to the hotel and borrow from our best man—happily

for us just arrived there on his own homeward route.

Somehow we minded little, but we reached Clapham one day late for the family Christmasing—arriving, indeed, when the turkey was already on the table, and I think it took all Joe's tact to win his mother's forgiveness.

So that was the end of our one week's wedding trip; it was back to work and a busy time we had of it till our son Philip was about nine months old. Then, by dint of Joe's unceasing work and my economy we found that we could allow ourselves a journey to Italy to stay with the various friends of my girlhood.

We called it our honeymoon—a belated one, like the gift of a portrait-bust of our boy at three years old, which Joe chaffed Miss Henrietta Montalba for presenting to us as a "wedding-present." But none the less a honeymoon for that, though not of the conventional and luxurious type.

Many a funny experience attended Joe's efforts to pursue in travel the economy which I had sternly sought to instil at home, and I am afraid that he never again fully resumed the good habit from which he then first broke away. Economy was not one of his virtues—was he not the son of an Irish-woman? But, then, generosity was. Burne-Jones once asked him why he took a cab to drive down the Strand, and he said it came cheaper, because if he walked he was sure to give half a crown to some former "stage-hand." Yet when another day Burne-Jones himself was deceived by a plausible story and Joe cried in reproof: "Can't you see

that it's only acting?" Burne-Jones replied: "Well, my dear, I've paid ten-and-six to see worse."

But in the days of our first foreign trip my extravagant husband was still "trying to be good."

I remember his taking the English prescription for a sedative to a small chemist on Lago Maggiore, whom he described as the alchemist in *Romeo and Juliet*; but when the dose, which at home represented about two tablespoonfuls, arrived in a straw covered quart "fiasco," he preferred a night's toothache to venturing on it.

As representing his sympathetic understanding of one side of the Italian character, I might cite our going into the quaintest of curiosity shops in an old town where we had to wait at a junction, and his tendering a cheque in payment of a trifling purchase. I am bound to say he confessed afterwards that he had only bought me the trinket in the faint hope of getting the change he needed and that he was as surprised as I was to see the ox-eyed little hunchback unearth a beautiful ancient casket and hand him from it the gold required.

Possibly the timid request having come from me in the man's own dialect may have helped to confirm the impression of "good faith" given by Joe's candid countenance; but he did naturally count on me; and on a different occasion when he was obstinately trying to drive a bargain with an unwisely grasping *vetturino*, his delight was great at the sudden drop of five francs in the demand of the astounded plunderer upon hearing his own vernacular from my indignant English lips.

There were many times when Joe would have none

of my help. When we were staying on the Riviera he would go every day into the town in the rattling little omnibus that plied along the dusty road, succeeding by sheer kindred *bonhomie* in making friends with the drivers and rejoicing at the abusive epithet of "ugly microbe" suggested by some late epidemic, with which they used at the time merrily to bombard one another.

His best crony amongst the friends of my childhood was the old priest of our Apennine village who had taught me the piano when I was a little girl, in exchange—as he always averred—for my instruction in my own tongue.

I'm afraid his conversational English was little credit to me and not much better than Joe's Italian, although the old man was a scholar and had taught himself enough, with occasional help from my father, to read Shakespeare in the original.

He pronounced the name with every vowel broad and separate, as in his Latin; this was easy in that case, but when he wanted to tell which were his "four favourite poets"—in which list he included musicians—he was sore put to it for the pronunciation of Byron, Beethoven and Bach.

But Joe taught him more than I had done at ten years old, for which the old man upbraided me again as he would have done in my baby days.

I can see him standing in his shabby cassock beneath his pergola with the sun filtering through the vines on to the hanging bunches of purple fruit, and shaking his finger at me with mock solemnity as of yore.

"When she was four years old she told me I spoke

English like a Spanish cow," said he, quoting a Genoese proverb. "But she taught me badly."

And then he related—what I refused at first to translate—how he had had to whip me for stealing his currants.

"Grapes she might have had—but English currants, they require *watering*."

And grapes *we* had too, as many as we could devour. In their natural form Joe could pluck and eat them gladly too; but when it came to the sour wine which the *Prevosto* had made from them and with which he served him at table, I am bound to confess that my husband risked disgracing me by spilling it on the brick floor when his host's back was turned; and on one occasion he even went so far as to pour a whole half *fiasco* through the little window which separated the refectory from the church, where he bespattered the marble pavement behind the high altar.

But these delinquencies remained a secret, and "Giò" became the old man's loved and patient instructor and friend.

"Tor bay or not tor bay," I seem to hear him painfully enunciating: and then Joe finishing Hamlet's familiar soliloquy in slow, even tones as they passed up the vineyards. Pleasant climbs they were through sweeping chestnut-woods and beside trickling trout-streams that grew to rushing torrents after a thunderstorm; climbs that ended perhaps at some mountain sanctuary whence the white cities of the plain could be seen beyond a sea of gently lowering ridges and crests; or sometimes only at some hamlet beside the stony bed of

the wandering river, where the old man would bid him wait while he mumbled his "Office" or went in "to see an ill" in one of the thatched cottages adorned with hanging fringe of golden maize-cones that cluster around the village fountain. It was here that one evening, when I had been my husband's companion, the village sempstress came forth to greet us—she who had made my own and my sister's new cotton frocks on that great occasion when the *Prevosto* had begged for us, as the "cleanest children in the village," to strew flowers before the Archbishop when he came for the Confirmation.

I reminded the old priest of it and he said : "Yes, yes ! And the Archbishop asked if you were Protestants and I answered 'Certainly ! but their parents did not refuse because we are Catholics : we all pray to the same God.'"

The sempstress was old when Joe saw her and so stout that the great scissors that hung from her vast apron bobbed as she moved ; but she was handsome still and gracious with the graciousness of a duchess ; I well recollect Joe's comment on it.

The laughing girls who clustered round us in wonder pinched his calves, perhaps to see if they were padded, though their excuse to old Teresa's sharp and quick reprimand was that they only wanted to feel "the beautiful real English wool" of his shooting stockings.

Joe had not objected, but she was not placated, and bade the hussies be off while she invited us into her dwelling.

A girl sat at the hand-loom, rapidly moving her bare brown feet and flinging the shuttle to and fro

for the weaving of the sheeting, a completed length of which lay beside her ready to be bleached on the stones by the river.

Joe wanted to hear about it from her, for her eyes were "like the fish pools of Heshbon"; but she jumped up at the mistress's bidding and he lost interest in weaving; I think he would even have tasted the sour wine which she presently brought on a copper tray if I had not quickly invented a polite fiction to the effect that Englishmen never drink anything but tea in the afternoon.

A slice of chestnut cake we were forced to accept from the elder woman's hospitable hand as she asked my husband's name. I remember the charming bow with which she turned to him after she had heard it and said: "*O che bel San Guiseppe!*" and his equally charming recognition of her pretty compliment.

Irish and Italian—there was some subtle affinity always between them—the grave and the gay, the superstitious and the Pagan, as *he* said—and he was positively confused when she observed that his golden beard and fair, curling hair were just like the St. Joseph's in the Church. It was a merry run we had down through the chestnut woods and a sweet walk by the river in the sunset, back to the Presbytery.

Graver but none the less satisfactory was the appreciation given to him by my old nurse, when we arrived presently in Genoa. She was of a different type—refined, sensitive, serious even to sadness—with the blight always on her of a foundling's ignorance of parentage; but devoted beyond

all words and of a rare intelligence : Joe was impressed with her and likened her to a female Dante.

Yet the brighter types were more in accordance with his holiday mood : when we were on a visit later at a mediaeval castle whose battlements stand sheer above the sea and whose olive groves slope to a transparent bay, he spent all the time not occupied by eating figs off the tree on the Castle keep to playing with half-naked brown urchins on the quay of the tiny fishing-port below.

His first acquaintance with one of them was at dead of night when we were alone in the weird old place and a hollow bell clanged suddenly through the hot air.

Joe got out of bed—his chief fear being lest the mosquitoes should take the chance to get in under the sheltering net—and made his way down a dark, vaulted passage to the outer gateway and what was once the portcullis. A ragged boy stood there with a telegram : it was an invitation which should have been delivered six hours before, but the boy had walked five miles along a cliff in the dark and Joe rewarded him so well that his fame was spread in the village and he never more walked peacefully abroad.

The little girls, however, were his chief pilferers : he could never refuse their appealing black eyes. And some of them were fine coquettes. I can see him now dancing a hornpipe on the quay with a half-clad little maiden who presently signed to him to take off his hat ; the elaborate bow with which he did so, bidding me apologise to her for the omission,

was worthy of the producer of many subsequent plays.

The little incident recalls another of later date.

Then it was in the Engadine that we were holiday-making. Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft—as they then were—had invited us to lunch at the Campfer Hotel and we had walked over from S. Moritz where we were lodged.

As we came up the path through the pine-wood beside the rushing stream we saw the famous little lady standing on the dusty road above to welcome us ; and Joe—his hat in his hand this time—began advancing towards her executing his hornpipe step.

To the entranced amazement of a few loungers, she picked up her skirts in the prettiest way imaginable and immediately responded with a *pas-seul* of her own—her little feet nimble as ever, till the two met, laughing immoderately, in the middle of the highway just as the diligence hove in sight.

CHAPTER IV

HOME LIFE AND DRAMATIC CRITICISM

THESE latter incidents occurred some time after 1873. When we got back to England after our Dresden wedding we took up our abode almost immediately in the old Adams house in Great Russell Street. The two rooms which Mr. Jameson sub-let to us were all that we could at first obtain above the Dispensary, but they were large and quite sufficient for the Bohemian life which was all that we could then afford ; anyway no subsequent home of ours was pleasanter and nothing was ever again so little burthensome.

At a long table by the door of the one large dwelling-room the old couple who had been our predecessor's factotums served our meals ; and around the handsome Adams chimney-piece at the other end, or in the panelled window-seats looking on the restful façade of the British Museum, we gathered Joe's friends—they were all Joe's friends—for a “ pipe and a chat.”

And what chats they were !

James Sime, the historian, kindest of men with his Teutonic philosophies and his deep Scottish

sentiment and enthusiasm ; Churton Collins richly capping his host's poetical quotations and sometimes boldly challenged for an inaccuracy ; W. Minto, afterwards Professor of Literature at Aberdeen, who was just starting his Editorship of *The Examiner*, and pressing Joe into the ranks of his contributors ; Camille Barrère, now French Ambassador in Rome, but then a Communist refugee earning a living by London journalism, and of whose friendship and instruction in French Joe tells himself ; Frederick Jameson and Beatty Kingston with their friends at piano and violin, to say nothing of the colleagues with whom my husband had just become associated in his work on *The Globe* and of whom he again tells in his *Eminent Victorians*.

Dare I recall the evening when my husband proudly named me to Minto as the writer of a little descriptive article which he had read in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the consequent suggestion that I should do the series of Italian sketches for *The Examiner* which were afterwards reprinted in a volume with Randolph Caldecott's illustrations.

Of course I should never have done even as much without their kindly encouragement, but to the end of his life I think a good review of any small effort of mine pleased Joe far more than one on his own serious work. But I must admit criticism affected him little—never when it was adverse and, in fact, only when it showed real insight.

In his own merry manner he would say : “ People always mean blame when they talk of criticism. But I can *blame* myself ; all I want from others is praise—fulsome praise.” And so it was ! He had

the need of it which came of the Celtic blend of self-confidence and apprehensiveness. Often have I heard him say of another of like blood: "He couldn't swim across the stream if he hadn't our native conceit." And then add gravely: "Believe me, praise is the only sort of criticism that ever helped a man on his road."

And in his own opportunities as critic and editor he always acted up to this belief.

In these rosy days of our early struggles and joys, the "first nights" at which Joe was due in his capacity of dramatic critic were red-letter days to me.

The occasion when Ellen Terry first played Portia under the Bancroft management of the famous little House in Tottenham Court Road was one of them; I can see her again in her china-blue and white brocade dress with one crimson rose at her bosom. Neither the fashion of the dress or of the coiffure were perhaps as correct to the period as the costumes which I designed for her later on for the better remembered run of *The Merchant of Venice* at the Lyceum; but how lovely she looked and how emphatically Joe picked her out as the evening's star beside Coghlan's Jew! Our hearts beat with pride at the laurels often gathered by our friend, even in those early days before her long list of triumphs with Henry Irving; and Joe, as we made our way home, took some credit to himself for the vehement advice as to her resuming her temporarily suspended career, which he had given her a short while before. There were never any first-nights quite like the Ellen Terry ones to us; but there

were many pleasant and exciting evenings—notably the nights of Irving's remarkable performances at a time when he was playing under the Bateman management in *The Bells*, *The Two Roses*, and many other of his early successes ; also the famous runs of Robertson comedies at the little *Prince of Wales* theatre, where the charming Marie Bancroft was at the top of her long popularity and John Hare's delicate impersonations vied with his manager's carefully studied portraits of the dandy of the day. Mrs. Kendal was also then at the height of her brilliant career, and last but not least, the first performances of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas were nights when the privilege of seats was not easily won.

I can recall the first performance of *Iolanthe*, and the laughter that shook the house when the wild applause at the close of the chorus : “ *Oh ! Captain Shaw, true type of love kept under,*” at last brought the Head of the Fire Brigade to the front of his box for an instant.

Yet all our first nights were not “ great nights,” when—as a fellow-critic once remarked to Joe—“ Strong men shook hands with strangers.” Sometimes they were even dull ; on one occasion so much so as to draw from one of the critics an unusually caustic bit of advice : “ We are told that so-and-so is a promising young actor,” he wrote, “ personally I don't care how much he promises so long as he never again performs.”

For my part I confess that the theatre was still so new to me that I looked forward to any first night with pleasant palpitation, though my best frock was no doubt reserved for the choicest prospects. But to

Joe, possibly the duty of writing the prescribed amount on a thoroughly poor piece grew irksome ; and when, as on the occasion of the production of F. C. Burnand's *The Colonel*, his friends and their serious work were the butt of boisterous hilarity, I know his loyalty found it difficult not to retort, as he apparently did in the article alluded to in the following correspondence.

It must have been written at the moment when the campaign against so-called " high art " was at its zenith, and had amused the public as it would probably not do to-day ; I should not quote it, but for the urbane humour of Joe's rejoinder to the (temporarily) incensed author.

Feb. 22, 1881.

" DEAR CARR,

I have heard that you do the *Saturday Review* theatrical criticisms. Did you do that on *The Colonel* ? if so I am anxious to know if you ever read *Un Mari à la Campagne* ; also to ask where the puns are in my piece ? I admit three, put in *carefully* into the right peoples' mouths—the right puns in the right places.

Why is it a farce ? Unless *She stoops to Conquer* is a farce. Where are the evidences of high animal spirits in my play ? I don't pretend to quote your article verbatim but this is my impression of its purport. Had I known at the time that it was your writing I should have tackled you at once ; first because I think you are wrong, second because if you are not, I am, and I wish to be put right. I should like to hear your suggestions for the improve-

ment of Act III. where you think I have bungled 'into seriousness.'

I shouldn't have taken the trouble to write if I hadn't been told that you were the critic who in a friendly way pooh-pooh'd the notion of *The Colonel* being a comedy. I am aware that Dr. Johnson set down *She stoops, etc.* as a farce, and farcical to a degree its plot is, but not its characters. *The Colonel* I contend is comedy—farcical neither in plot *nor* characters.

Yours truly,

F. C. BURNAND (anxious to learn)."

19, BLANDFORD SQUARE, N.W.,
February 24th, 1881.

"DEAR BURNAND,

I do not as a rule write the Dramatic Criticism for the *Saturday Review*, only when the regular critic is away; but you are right in supposing that I am the author of the article on *The Colonel*.

Your letter was a surprise to me. I liked *The Colonel* and thought I had said as much: but I liked it in my own way and I am not going to be bullied out of my admiration by the modesty of the author.

I thought it a brightly written farce with a rather weak last act. You tell me, and of course you ought to know, that it is not a farce but a comedy: but if I were to adopt your classification I should not like it at all, and I want to like it if you will let me—in my own way.

You ask where the puns are and in the same breath you tell me where they are. There are three of them you say, and they are all in the right places. But I never hinted, my dear fellow, that they were not in the right places. On the contrary it was your gravity not your humour I found to be in the wrong place. You ask me again where are the evidences of high animal spirits in your play ; after your letter I shall begin to doubt my recollections, but I had certainly thought the interest of the play was mainly supported by its high spirits. To be able to keep a wildly extravagant notion alive for the space of three acts, demands I think an ample supply of animal spirits. But is it a crime to have high animal spirits ? I thought it was only the gloomy apostle of high art who loathed hilarity.

I haven't the faintest objection to your tackling me, as you call it, but you must give me leave to speak freely. When I hear you say that *The Colonel* is farcical neither in plot nor characters, I begin seriously to wonder whether your letter is not altogether a form of practical joke.

I will not let myself be diverted by your allusions to *She Stoops to Conquer*. The suggested resemblance had not, I confess, occurred to me ; there seem to me many differences between the two works but this is rather a question for posterity.

If, however, you insist on taking Goldsmith into your skiff it will not be thought presumption on my part if I choose my place in Dr. Johnson's heavier craft. I would prefer, however, to take your own account of your work. Not farcical in plot or character ! Surely your career as a humourist has

been fed by the rarest and most delightful experience, if it has brought you into contact with the kind of man who would be driven to the verge of immorality by a dado ! No, I can't think you serious ! ”

Here my copy—the rough one of the letter sent—comes to an end ; and I have not F. C. Burnand's further reply.

But it is good to remember that there was never any breach between the friends ; I find a scenario by Burnand for a children's Christmas play—evidently sent to Joe about the time when he produced Buchanan's version of the *Pied Piper of Hamelin* at the Comedy Theatre with Lena Ashwell—still a student at the Royal Academy of Music—acting and singing the girl's part.

And from a much later period I can quote the following further proof of unimpaired friendship in a letter written to thank Joe for having been largely instrumental in getting up the dinner given to Burnand on his withdrawal from the editorship of *Punch*.

GROSVENOR HOTEL,
LONDON, S.W.,
June 11th, 1911.

“ MY DEAR CARR,

I cannot thank you sufficiently for all you have done in this matter which would never have resulted in the great success it undoubtedly achieved but for the first generous impetus which set the ball in motion, and for the continued well directed shoves that kept it rolling.

Without your speech the entertainment would have been comparatively flat ; but your speech opened a fresh bottle and infused a fresh life.

Yours most sincerely,

F. C. BURNAND."

Apropos of Lena Ashwell, I may say that Joe was then so much struck with her talent for acting that he persuaded her to leave the musical profession, for which she was being trained, and gave her the part of *Elaine* in his *King Arthur*, shortly afterwards produced by Henry Irving at the Lyceum Theatre.

I set down these trivial memories as they recur to me, sprinkled over many a year of work and of anxieties, but of much merriment and many joys. But, taking up the thread of the first year of our married life, I recall an amusing incident which bore some pleasant consequences.

Joe, as was often the case, had sat up writing his dramatic criticism after I, tired with the still thrilling excitement of some "first night," had gone to bed.

He had posted his article and was sleeping the sleep of the just, when our hoary retainer mercilessly awakened him early next morning with the words : "Gentleman on business, Sir !"

He donned a dressing-gown and went down none too willingly, to find an unknown little Scot below, who briefly stated that he was empowered by the proprietors of some Encyclopaedia to offer him a goodly fee for a short life of—I think it was—Rossetti ; but that owing to another writer having

disappointed the Editor at the eleventh hour the copy must be delivered in three days.

Joe was full of work, but the sum was too princely to be refused by a man who knew that shortly he would have to feed an extra mouth ; the impossible was achieved, there was not even time to see a proof—and I well remember Joe, when telling his tale to a friend, confessing his relief that he had never come across that volume, and could only hope that no one else ever had either.

The cheque, at all events, he *did* see, and with a part of it we went to Derbyshire for our first country holiday. And a wild, happy holiday it was !

We lodged in the roughest of cottages in a tiny village near the Isaac Walton Hotel, where Joe had contrived to get some fishing rights. With what enthusiasm did he show me the haunts of his boyish holidays, the scenes of fishing adventures and of great walks with early comrades !

But that cheque from the Scottish publishers contributed to other things besides a holiday. In the November of that year our son, Philip, was born. Strange now to think that he, who was in France throughout the Great War, should have had a German for his first nurse, and that before he could speak he could hum many a Volkslied—an accomplishment which his proud nurse and mother made him show off to our musical friend, Mr. Jameson, who indeed even insisted on testing his intonation on the piano.

Other distinguished folk gathered around his cradle in the big studio. I can see Ellen Terry nursing him in one of the wainscoted window-seats and so

apparently carelessly in one arm while she made wide gestures with the other to emphasize some point she was discussing with my husband—that I, nervous young mother, was forced to cry out at last : “ Oh, Nell ! Take care of my baby.”

Upon which she, in a tone of commiserating reproach, replied : “ Now, Alice, do you suppose I need teaching how to hold a child ? ”

Anyone who has seen her do it—even on the stage—knows very well that she did not.

So the discussion went on and I even remember the subject : for it was just when she was weighing the offer of a fresh engagement on the stage, upon which she had only then appeared in extreme youth. Joe gave his advice emphatically, though he had never seen her act then and did not know upon what a future that door would open.

The opportunity was to be the production of her old friend Charles Reade’s *Wandering Heir*. The caste was not strong, and it was not wonderful that “ Nell ” scored a success ; but I think Joe saw more than most people in that first night at the Queen’s Theatre when he rushed out between the acts and returned with a rather damaged bouquet, the only one left in Covent Garden, which he presently threw at her feet.

It was the first of many a “ first night ” when he watched her—critical, as it was his business to be, but sympathetic and enthusiastic always. There was no limit to his praise, for instance, of her pathetic portrayal of *Ophelia* : nor of his immediate appreciation of that moment in her otherwise tender impersonation of *Olivia* in *The Vicar of Wakefield*

when she strikes the young Squire on discovering his treachery. But these were only two out of many thrilling "first nights" of her earlier engagements when I sat beside him, my perfect enjoyment not even hampered, as in later years at the Lyceum, by my anxiety respecting the proper finishing and donning of the dresses which I had designed for her.

But that day in Great Russell Street, even Joe, always nervous about the children, thought more of our first born. To me her reproof had been convincing; I never again feared Ellen Terry as the safe and tender guardian of my children; indeed she first taught me much delicate observation of infants, but Joe—often terrified about them—believed in no advice save that of his mother, who had borne thirteen and reared eleven; yet upon one point my shrewd Irish mother-in-law, with her always wise but sometimes wittily caustic advice, and the more indulgent artist were agreed, viz. that—as our country butcher delighted Joe by saying about his live "meat"—babies, though disciplined, should be "humoured not druv."

Although nervous in moments of crisis Joe was, however, always calm and competent; but he generally managed to relieve the situation with his own irrepressible spirits at the earliest possible moment, and many a comic tale hangs round the strange doings of an incapable old Gamp who tended me at the birth of my second child.

He would lure her with the seemingly innocent question: "Sweetened or unsweetened gin, Mrs. Peveril?" knowing well that the spirit was needed

for friction and that "Peveril of the Peak" (otherwise hook-nosed) as he had named her, would "rise" every time and answer demurely: "I'm sure *I* don't know, Sir. I never tasted neither."

Luckily the old lady was neither sharp enough to see nor thin-skinned enough to mind; but who ever minded Joe's wit? Though it was keen enough at times, the urbanity behind it shone through too well.

Even his wife was a willing target—and a good one. As Edward Burne-Jones used kindly to say when they had both tried me on their favourite theme and taken me in over a Dickens quotation: "There never was anybody who rose better than the dear lady." Yet I maintain that it needs a profound student of the master to know that he has created an obscure character named "Pip," other than the human boy in *Great Expectations*.

Well, many is the *bon mot* to which I helped my husband.

When I declared myself nervous over my part in private theatricals at my father's house in Canterbury, I can hear him say: "You are surely not bothering your head about two half-pay officers and a rural dean?"

And one day at a picnic, commenting on a criticism of a sturdy Irish uncle as to "not wanting these slight figures at all, at all," Joe gave me the sound advice not to sit upon a rock "lest diamond cut diamond."

We were all young then and things that may seem truly foolish now made the company laugh; it is more remarkable that the radiant personality,

the inexhaustible animal spirits and rare sense of humour should have survived years of hard work and still have shone forth after the prostration of illness.

When scarcely recovered from a serious attack, Joe told me one morning of a dream that he had had, which—as Mr. W. J. Locke has remarked—contained such a “lightning flash of characterization” that it is hard to believe it came to him in sleep.

“I dreamed,” he said, “that Squire Bancroft brought me some grapes, and as he removed the paper from the basket he said, “White, Joe; when the case is serious I never bring black.”

All through his illness, when increasing weakness and the inconveniences arising from the Great War forced him to an uncongenial life at sea-side resorts, his wit still bubbled up unbidden, as the following letter testifies. The boarding-house in which it was written did not afford exactly sympathetic society, yet on the Christmas Day that we spent there he offered to give the company a little “talk” if they cared to listen; and from his armchair, he chatted for half an hour to a crowded lounge on the eminent men whom he had known, interspersed with many a flash of fun appropriate to the hour and received with bursts of laughter by the simple circle.

“... We are comfortable enough here,” he wrote to his daughter, “and there is entertainment furnished by some of the types, both in their physique and in their intellectual equipment. Some of the older females are designed and constructed with “dangerous salients in their lines,” everything occurring in unexpected places, and only dimly

suggesting the original purpose of the Creator. One or two are of stupendous girth with hollows and protuberances that suggest some primeval landscape subjected to volcanic action."

Thus with the same humorous and kindly eye on the world as when he had been the welcome entertainer of a more brilliant society, he lightened the days—very heavy to him—of national anxiety, and with a contentment rather wonderful in the typical Londoner, alternated the few possible hours of patient literary labour with a cheerful delight in the beauties of the place.

"I wonder if the present difficulty in getting out of England will make us appreciate it better," he said as we stood one evening on the pier looking towards old Hastings. "If we were abroad we should say that medieval castle against the sunset was a wondrous fine sight."

So did he still exemplify his life-long belief often expressed in the words: "How can people be dull when they're alive?"

CHAPTER V

JOURNALISM AND LETTERS

MY husband has given some account of his days at the Bar in his own *Reminiscences*. I shall, therefore, not touch on that part of his career, as it was practically ended before I knew him—the necessity of earning daily grist for the mill having carried him entirely into the ranks of journalism.

I believe he got through a quite unusual amount of work in that profession. Many an evening did I put back our little dinner while he rushed off to Euston to give his copy of Art Criticism for the *Manchester Guardian* into the hands of the guard for early morning delivery: he wrote on the same subject for the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Art Journal*, and what with criticism and social articles for the *Saturday Review* and *World*, he was never in bed till long after midnight.

It must have been about this time that he took me with him to Paris for a short so-called holiday while he wrote his criticism for the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the *Salon* of the year.

A gladsome time it was in that most smiling

of cities in spring. There was a day on which a cry of dismay arose from our party—including his fellow-worker and old friend, Adam Gielgud with his wife—when a letter arrived from Edmund Yates refusing to let Joe off his weekly article in the series of Skits on the London newspapers which were then attracting attention in the *World*—I think the topic for that week was *The Old Maid of Journalism* ("The Spectator") and perhaps that dignified lady received a more caustic drubbing than she would otherwise have had because of the distaste with which he set to his task.

Cheerful meals in the humblest of restaurants—whenever we could run to it, in the excellent Café Gaillon—now the fashionable *Henry*, but then of far simpler ambitions; merry meetings at the house of that good comrade of Joe's of whom he tells the tale of exchanged French and English lessons at *Kettner's* restaurant in London, and lastly a gorgeous feast in the suburban home of a fellow contributor to *L'Art*, to both of which festivities my sister, Mrs. Harrison—then Alma Strettell—was bidden as being of our party.

Both occasions were a pleasant peep into Parisian bourgeois life. Our first host was eager to show that he could give us a *gigot* of mutton as well roasted as in London, and sorely crestfallen was the poor man when the little joint came to table black as a cinder and blue when cut. Joe quickly made capital out of the catastrophe, however, by declaring that one didn't come to Paris to eat home fare, and that it served his friend right for putting his cook to such an unworthy task.

Our second entertainment, though we did not meet such intellectual company as the distinguished writers on the *Temps* and the *Débats*, who so courteously helped Joe to express brilliant ideas in daringly lame French and paid such charming court to my sister and myself, was more typical of its class ; for, although the young couple of the house were our entertainers, the old couple were our hosts, and it was wondrous and delightful to see the respectful attitude of the son and his wife to the parents and the undisputed supremacy which they held from their two ends of the long table set out under the trees of the flower-laden May.

A rushing week it was, into which my sister and I crammed much enthralling shopping. I can see now Joe's reproachful face at the door of the café where we had kept him waiting half an hour for *déjeuner* after his hot and tiring morning's work at the *Salon*. I made a shameless excuse to the effect that we had secured many "occasions" (bargains). And as I gave him a toothbrush which he had asked me to buy, he said : "Is this an 'occasion' too ? I'd rather have a punctual meal than an occasional toothbrush !"

Merry hours but very far from idle ones, and he reaped an additional and unexpected reward for his labours when we got home.

We had been bidden to a cricket match at his old school the day after our return, where, in virtue of his old rank of Captain of the Eleven, he was to play as a visitor ; and I seem to see the boyish blush of satisfaction with which he told his beloved master—Dr. Birkbeck Hill—that it was he and

no leader-writer on the *Times*, as was rumoured, who was writing those humorous articles on the newspapers for the *World*.

My husband has told so much of the tale of his early journalistic days in his *Eminent Victorians* that I find little to add ; but I remember a curious incident in the fine old room at Great Russell Street when George Hake—Dante Gabriel Rossetti's secretary—came one day, ostensibly "on his own," to have a talk with him on the series of papers on painters of the day, appearing above the signature of "Ignotus," but of which the authorship had leaked out.

Joe has told, in *Coasting Bohemia*, of the rift in his friendship with Rossetti over these articles, and a sad tale it is. Mr. Hake fancied that Rossetti would like to see his friend's bride, but, alas ! he was taking too much on himself, for the visit never came off. But Rossetti was at that time already an invalid and was not to be counted upon.

It must have been some time after this that the French proprietors of that luxurious publication, *L'Art*, invited Joe to run a London office for its sale, in connection with which he afterwards started an English version—*Art and Letters*—edited and largely written by himself.

Many funny incidents group themselves around the person of the French proprietor, whose English, though insistently fluent, was of the lamest, and I think Joe sometimes led him on in the expectation of some pleasant malapropism.

"How are you now ?" he would ask, when the poor gentleman had "suffered the sea."

“Only ’alf and ’alf, my friend,” the Frenchman would reply. “But I must back tonight. I make my trunk at four.” And his apt *mots* on the super-sensitive lady-assistant who “always begin to tear for nothing” and “forgive never man that he ’ave not married her” afforded Joe continual delight.

But a courtlier host than that Frenchman never existed. He would entertain us royally at the old *Maison Dorée* when we went to Paris though he ate but little himself and always preferred the humbler Café Duval; so little, in fact, was he in accord with most men of his nation upon the food question that, when Joe gave him the usual fish dinner at Greenwich, he was naturally dismayed at the explanation, after several courses had been passed by, of “*Mon ami, je ne mange jamais du poisson.*”

Art and Letters, though an artistic was not a financial success, but it may have led to the one of his many adventures of which he was perhaps the most proud: the planning and editing, at the request of Messrs. Macmillan, of their beautiful magazine, the *English Illustrated*.

He has spoken so well himself of his pleasant intercourse with the men who worked for him—struggling men in those days but known to fame since—that there is little left for me to record, save to note that among the many tributes from his many friends I prize not least those of his collaborators of that time, with the oft-repeated testimony to his having helped them to the first-rung on the ladder of success.

Mr. Stanley Weyman, whose first book, *The House of the Wolf*, was published in those pages, comes first to my mind, and those who have read my husband's *Eminent Victorians* will recollect the striking proof of the accuracy of his critical faculty in the incident of Mr. Weyman's bringing him two letters—written with an interval of many years—in which he criticized a play of that brilliant novelist's in almost identical words, although the first letter was written openly to the author and the second—in forgetfulness of the fact—to a theatrical agent who had not divulged the playwright's name.

Robert Louis Stevenson was one of his cherished contributors, and I recall an angry rebuke from that great man to the Editor, who had dared to strike out a word in the title of one of his articles at the moment of going to press; it is pleasant to add that a placated and highly amused reply followed on Joe's deft and short method of extricating himself from the position: "My dear Stevenson—You see, I knew that the extra word was a slip of the pen," he wrote, "for I should as soon have expected you to talk of female bitches as of male dogs. Yours etc."

Sir James Barrie wrote one of his early essays for the *English Illustrated Magazine*, and in a kindred branch of the adventure—that of illustration—Mr. Hugh Thomson was discovered by Joe—a poor Irish lad living on the scanty pay of advertisements for a business firm, and devoting all his leisure to flights of fancy in the most delicate realms of the humorous eighteenth century subjects

in which he has always excelled. Joe confessed to me on the day when the boy sought an interview, with his portfolio under his arm, that he did not at first believe he had done the drawings himself. But he gave him a subject, and when he returned with it after a day or two his doubts were set at rest, and he offered him the post which he held for so long with distinction.

The relations between editor and artist were always affectionate and I have two letters from the latter—one to Joe and one to myself—full of a touching gratitude such as perhaps only an Irishman could have expressed. The one quoted below is of later date.

27, PERHAM ROAD,
WEST KENSINGTON,
February 5th, 1909.

DEAR MR. COMYNS CARR,

It is only now that we have contrived to get a reading of your delightful book "Some Eminent Victorians," and it has literally staggered me (with delight) to find myself in such company. I so rarely see a soul that I was entirely ignorant, and never dreamt of it. We had of course read such reviews of the book as came our way and had rejoiced in the whole-hearted pleasure with which the notices were charged but we never suspected that in a corner of the book you had propped me up. My wife is more than ever confirmed in her opinion that you are the most delightful author that ever lived, and she is already looking forward, frugally, to the time when the libraries will be selling off their soiled copies of books when she hopes

to secure Some Eminent Victorians and ME for her very own. Possibly you might think it forward in me if I told you what a genuine delight it is to read the book for the way it is written. Your pages on Bright and the orators are as eloquent as they. But it is all the most entertaining book we have read for ages. Below is a memory of the famous interview you had with the suspicious character from Ireland. I think I have caught the bannisters well, as also Lacour waiting outside.

Your delighted

HUGH THOMSON.

So much for the affectionate reverence in which one held him who was starting life's race when that "famous interview" took place. Joe was comparatively young himself then, but as the years went on there were many of greater disparity in age, who did not fail to pay him the same tribute ; indeed, I don't think there was ever any sense of difference in this respect between him and the many good comrades in many classes of society who rejoiced to *work* with him because he always lightened labour with kindness and good humour—who rejoiced to *play* with him because he was never afraid of, or at a loss for, the right word at the right moment, were it grave or gay, appreciative or pungent as the occasion required.

He was always the encourager, never the discourager, of sincere and patient effort : bombast and a pandering to mere popularity, he could censure with words of biting wit, but he never laughed

at those who sent their arrows at the moon though he knew well enough that such might not achieve financial prosperity. His unfaltering advice was always that everyone should stick to what he best loved to do.

"My dear," I remember his saying to me one day, when I had tried and signally failed to write a popular farce, "it takes a more competent fool than you to know just what kind of foolishness the public wants. Don't you be put off what you *can* do because you fancy it is not what they want."

And in a letter written perhaps in a more serious spirit to one often oppressed by a sense of failure I find the words : "There is no such thing as failure—excepting the failure to see and love the beauty of life."

These are among the graver memories of him : his generation will remember him most readily for what Sir James Barrie, writing to me of him as "a man for whom I had a mighty admiration," appreciatively describes as "his positive genius for conversation." The latter word is so apt because it perceives that the Celtic gift of repartee was the most finely pointed of his arrows : he was generally at his best when some might have fancied that he was going to be non-plussed.

One day he told me of a dinner at which King Edward VII., then Prince of Wales, was the honoured guest. Someone had whispered to the Prince that my husband was a Radical, and he, turning to him, asked if such a thing could be true.

"I *am* a Radical, Sir," replied Joe, and after

a little pause added : " but I never mention it in respectable society."

The table was silent for an instant, but the Prince led the way with a laugh and all was well.

A funny little incident, told me in the small hours when Joe came home, described the dire discomfiture of one of his greatest admirers when, having invited him to supper that he might silence " a conceited young ass " by his superior wit, the " conceited young ass " so fancied himself as to monopolize the whole conversation : this fiasco, though not to his own glorification, caused Joe infinite delight ; but the disgusted host was only consoled after he had arranged a duel for my husband with Robert Marshall, the playwright, a recognised wit—the condition being that neither should think before speaking : I consider that here an unfair advantage was taken—any one who was a friend of Joe's knowing full well that this was just the whip of which he loved the lash. Be it added that this tilt between the two knights cemented their friendship.

A host of these incidents took place in his well-loved Garrick Club, of which—by the testimony of many friends—he was the heart and soul and some add the good genius. I believe there were quarrels not a few that he averted or headed by his tact and kindly humour—quarrels that might sometimes have led to sorrowful decisions by the Club Committee to which he belonged. He told me one day of a humorous end to an earnest expostulation he had held with poor Harry Kemble—greatly beloved in spite of his known weakness :

"Every word you say is true, my dear Joe," the actor had replied with the tears streaming down his great cheeks—"but what if I like it?"

It is good to remember that that colossal figure—of which our daughter, seeing it on the stage when she was a child, asked tremulously, "Is it a human being?"—remained to the end an honoured institution of the Club.

Of Joe's tactful capacity as a peacemaker I was a witness at the home of my mother's family—the beautiful Gothic Abbey of Bisham near Marlow. We were staying with my cousin, George Vansittart, who was then the owner. He was the kindest of men, but had a peppery and ill-controlled temper, and nothing so inflamed it as the growing habit with trippers on the Thames of landing upon his grounds. His gardeners and keepers were sternly bidden to warn off these rash people, and he himself, if walking or shooting in Bisham woods—quite a mile from the Abbey—would angrily bid them begone.

One day he and Joe were sitting in his ground-floor library facing the river, when he espied a boat containing a lady and a man making across stream towards the big trees shading his lawns. He jumped up—his face flushed, and watched the man rise, a powerful figure, ship his sculls and push into shore. "By—, the insolent brute! Under my very nose!" shrieked the incensed squire. And, seizing a heavy stick he strode out of the French window—Joe following somewhat alarmed.

My cousin took no pains to soften the language with which he addressed "the insolent brute"

before he was half-way across the lawn, and Joe hastened as he saw the big man step defiantly out of the boat while the woman wept and implored him unavailingly to return. Joe caught my cousin by the arm—he was getting on in years—for as he drew near he saw that the intruder was an actor—of no great refinement—known in the profession for a swaggering bully.

“There’s a lady in the boat, Mr. Vansittart,” said my husband. Instantly my cousin stopped, and the man, recognising Joe, greeted him surlily and presently turned back to his companion now fainting on the bank. Joe followed him, and George Vansittart, returning to the house, called out to his butler, who was hastening to the scene: “Take out some brandy and water for the lady and see she needs nothing.” Joe brought back a message of thanks from the poor thing, and was far too anxious lest the outbreak should affect my cousin’s health to mind his remark that he was to be congratulated upon his acquaintance.

Recurring to that appreciation of him by the young in his last years, which is one of the sweetest tributes to Joe’s memory, many alert and boyish faces rise up before me; eager over some animated discussion in which the give-and-take was always even between the older man and the younger, or alight with laughter at his quaint wit and merry censure of some foible of the day; for though he could laugh at its foibles he was never out of heart with the world, which was always to him a good world, even when he prophesied that, through *some* crucible, the crazes of the last twenty years would

have to pass for elimination. "They have got to have this epidemic," he would say of Cubist painter and eccentric poet, "but they'll get over it, and meanwhile the good old world will go on quietly as usual and young folk will fall in love and want poets to sing for them and so the best things must come to the top in the end."

Apart from this sort of, as he called it, "half-baked" thought, he was always ready to weigh and consider every new aspect of life; and if no passing mode could deceive him or put him out of heart, either with his life-long heroes or with his own methods of expression; yet to the last hour he was always keen—not only for fresh work himself, but to see the work of the world develop. In the words of Mr. Stopford Brooke, quoted in the *Life* by Prof. L. P. Jacks, he would have said: "Whether in this world or another we will pursue, we will overtake, we will divide the spoil."

And so, whether he were hanging over the garden gate of our holiday home gathering information from the labourers who passed along the road, or discussing ethical problems with his sons and their friends, he was always "pursuing"—and the young were always at home with him, for he never wanted to lead only to express his opinion and listen to their reply.

One of these younger men—Mr. Hammond, by no means an "obscure" one—writes: "There have been few men whose companionship was so delightful to all who had the privilege of knowing him. . . . I always remember with gratitude that he allowed even young and obscure people to

enjoy the pleasure of his best conversation—one of the rarest intellectual pleasures that I have ever known.”

And Mr. Hugh Sidgwick—killed in the prime of his own rare intellectual career—follows with what might be called an echo : “ I can’t say how much I owe to him and to you for the many happy hours I spent at your house. He never let the barrier of the generations stand between him and us young men and we all of us looked on him as a real friend and the most delightful of companions. There are memories of many good talks and jovial discussions—with Mr. Carr always leading and contributing more than his share of life and vivacity to them. And it was inspiring to us—more perhaps than appeared—to meet one who was so young in heart, so full of life and so sensitive to all the beauties of all the arts.”

The words of W. A. Moore—blessed with his own Celtic temperament and eager fighting quality—sound the same note :

“ It was a great thing to have known him,” he writes from Salonica, “ I can never forget him for he was a most radiant personality.” It is a curious thing that a kindred epithet—“ joyous personality ”—was a favourite one of his own, and he would maintain that you could see two men in the Seven Dials—one lean, soured and scowling, his companion stout, merry, humorous and full of vitality, though both dwelt on the same gutter and wore the same threadbare garments.

It is, of course, quite impossible to give on paper any idea whatever of the charm and brilliancy

which these and many more testimonies prove ; to quote some words spoken by our friend Sir Arthur Pinero, " It is rather like trying to remember the summers of years ago ! " and he left so few letters, possibly because he possessed that " genius of conversation," that he has few words to say for himself ; but it may not be inappropriate here to quote two which he wrote to an old friend who had affectionately watched his whole career and highly appraised his powers and judgment.

The first is in answer to an appeal as to whether it showed " symptoms of senile decay " not to be able to admire *The Hound of Heaven* by Francis Thompson, which had been hailed with a shout of praise from a section of the public. I quote it as showing Joe's own confession of faith in regard to the poetry that endures.

" My dear—The Hound is a Mongrel. I know him of old and have more than once driven him from my door. Several friends have endeavoured to persuade me that he was of the true breed but I would have none of him and will not now. Upon the provocation of your letter I read the thing again and most gladly and willingly share your symptoms of senile decay. The fabric of it I take to be pure fustian. And there is not a line in it that does not debauch the language it employs ; not a phrase in it that does not seem to me to vulgarize by its expression whatever innocent thought may underlie it.

The more I ponder over the great verse which time has left impregnable, the more I am impressed

by the true poet's unfailing reverence for the sanctity of words in their relation to sense and by his stern rejection of all melody that is not rooted there : the tinkling cadence of an obvious tune is not for him. His purpose might be taken to be no other than to express in final simplicity the thought that is in him. Why it is, or how it is, that in this process he achieves a result, in which the sense of beauty banishes all remembrance of intellectual origin—that is the poet's secret : the mystery and the mastery of his craft.

But I am getting into depths that cannot be plumbed on this tiny sheet of paper. It is the old subject of many a long night's talk with you and concerns matters in which I think you and I are of accord. . .

As to *Electra* (Richard Strauss' opera) of course I have no right to plead before that tribunal ; but the terms in which it is praised make me suspect it is not praiseworthy.

Yours ever,

J. W. COMYNS CARR."

In relation to the above I cannot refrain from quoting an appreciation of my husband written some little while later by the late Theodore Watts Dunton. He had asked for news of his old friend after his first serious illness, and the following passage occurs in his acknowledgment of the reply :

"Although he belongs to a later generation than mine, he and I are as intimate as brothers and I deeply prize the intimacy. There is no man

on this earth whom I love more. Moreover I have always asserted that he is a man of genius—a true poet, with wings clipped, for the present, by the conditions of life.”

As his intimates know, Charles Dickens was one of the brightest stars in my husband's firmament. During all the years of our marriage, I never remember him without a volume of Dickens and one of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* beside his bed. Many a “night's talk” with the life-long friend to whom he wrote as above had been devoted to ineffectual attempts to converting him to a real appreciation of Dickens—attempts which, as the following letters show, were finally successful.

“MY DEAR,—

I am very much interested in your letter about Dickens. . . [This was in the early stage of conversion.] Curiously enough I have lately been reading the whole of Macready's Diary and was immensely interested in it. His conceit of course is colossal, but the diary struck me as affording a revelation of a real and virile creature of great independence of character, gifted on occasion with striking insight and vision. I was noticing as I read that Dickens was the only one of all his friends of long date with whom he never quarrelled, and it struck me that there must have been something innately fine and magnanimous in Dickens' nature to command this constancy of friendship from a man so vain and irascible as Macready.

But Macready sometimes sees far and I think

his understanding of Browning and his appreciation of the poet's inherent limitations in the field of drama are very illuminating. Evidently the drama was the goal of Browning's ambition and yet it has always seemed to me—as it appeared to Macready—that he was not in essence a dramatist at all.

When you next come to London you should look in at the Grafton Gallery and take a glance at the Post Impressionists. I saw most of them in Paris, with something added of further extravagance and crude indecency; but the Parisian critics, with few exceptions, took small account of the matter. Here, on the contrary, nearly all the younger critics are at their feet. It seems to me to indicate a wave of disease, even of absolute madness; for the whole product seems to breathe not ineptitude merely but corruption—especially marked in a sort of combined endeavour to degrade and discredit all forms of feminine beauty.

Yours ever,

JOE."

Later this was his great indictment of the Cubists also, well known to his friends in the Club.

The following letter is to the same correspondent written during the last year of his life and in much more satisfied mood on the subject of his hero.

HASTINGS, 1915.

"MY DEAR,—

It gave me delight to get your letter—the greater in that you talk to me of Dickens.

I never tire of him nor of talking of him. But I was not unprepared for your enthusiasm. I remember only the last time we touched on the topic it was already brewing. I am struck above all by what you feel about the composer's gift in him, that unconscious power of massing and moulding his material, the instructive adjustment of varying currents in the narrative, so that—as he traces the courses in which they run, we recognise in wonderment that they are confluent streams though often seeming for the time to flow so far asunder. Even the most modest of us are, I think, sometimes aware that there is a force outside ourselves which holds the reins of our fancy and that we must needs obey; but the exercise of that faculty in Dickens approaches the miraculous. At times it would almost seem as if he threw down the gauntlet to himself, directly challenging his own powers of artistic control by flinging at his own feet the unsifted harvest of the most prodigal invention with which man was ever endowed and defying the artist in him to reduce it to order and harmony.

And yet the artist invariably wins and by a victory so complete as to cheat us into the belief that every obstacle he subdues was an integral feature of the original design. Inexhaustible invention and unfailing control, these are the things that always seem to me to set Dickens on an eminence which he shares with no one in his own time and with only a few in our creative literature of any time. Shakespeare stands there—as he stands everywhere, no matter what the quality to be

appraised or what the arena in which it finds exercise, above all rivalry ; and Walter Scott most surely and securely too ; and . . . well, I don't feel able to be certain about any others ! . . .

I am not disposed to quarrel about *Bleak House*, I do not like it ; but that story and *Little Dorrit* have always been my stumbling blocks.

On the other hand I heartily agree about *Our Mutual Friend* ; I think it illustrates a giant's way with Nature which becomes a fawning slave before the tyranny of genius.

Yours ever,

JOE."

CHAPTER VI

BOOKS AND TRAVEL

OF work in volume form my husband left comparatively little, and all the books of his earlier years were on Art. His criticisms on the various exhibitions of Old Masters at Burlington House, chiefly written at that time for the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Art Journal*, were useful to him in a volume on *The Drawings of the Old Masters* in the British Museum, upon which subject he was a careful and enthusiastic student; and at a somewhat later period—when he and Mr. C. E. Hallé organized the famous exhibitions of those drawings at the Grosvenor Gallery—a recognised connoisseur.

It is interesting to note that much of the matter written in those early years upon a subject on which he was always a master was echoed involuntarily in my husband's swan-song upon the same subject, i.e. *The Ideals of Painting*, posthumously published in 1917; for although he naturally acquired a deeper knowledge of individual pictures as the years went on, bringing him opportunities of visiting the great collections of Europe, he very rarely

changed his opinion of the characteristics of each painter ; and his loving appreciation of the subtlest qualities in his favourites was such that I remember a gifted connoisseur saying to him once respecting a fellow art critic : " So-and-so could tell you whether a picture was authentic or not with his back to it, provided he had got its pedigree at his fingers ends ; but you don't depend on books ; you know the man and his method and study the painter in the light of them, and if your verdict is sometimes at variance with the alleged pedigree, by Jove, you're generally right."

So thoroughly had he steeped himself in the subject that when we went on our belated honeymoon to the towns of Northern Italy, he always knew exactly where every picture was that he wanted to see, and many is the argument that I had in those less enlightened days with Italian officials as to the existence of some particular work of Art which they little knew was under their care, and many lovely things we found in private places which, perhaps even now, are missed by the ordinary tourist.

I recollect the weary trip he made from Milan that he might study the wonderful Luini frescoes at Saronno. Now the little town is on a railway, but in those days it was only reached in a horse-omnibus, slowly jogging, as only the poor starved Italian horses of that day *could* jog, across the sun-baked Lombard plains. The beautiful lunar frescoes, some of them in sepia, in the sacristy of the Church of San Maurizio Maggiore at Milan, were among the things which we should never have

seen if he had not made me insist on the sacristan opening that closed door that he might examine for himself. And a really funny incident occurred at Mantova—a town lying off the regular route, but so picturesque, with its lovely Palazzo del Tè raised on arcades built into the marshes—that it is strange it should not be oftener visited by the tourist.

We lodged in a vast but dirty old Inn, waited on by a girl whose beauty compensated, in *Joe's* eyes only, for slipshod methods; nothing but my knowledge of the tongue would have procured us even the comfort of a huge warming-pan with which I endeavoured to dry the damp sheets. After a sleepless night and a tiring morning in the Castle looking at the Mantegna portraits of grim Gonzagas and stooping to enter the "dwarf's apartments," whence slits of windows peer upon the eerie marshland, I was in no mood for an altercation. Yet an altercation was the only means by which I finally succeeded in inducing the morose custodian of a dark church in the town to do *Joe's* will: he had come to Mantova to see examples of Mantegna for some work that he was doing and he was not going away without having unearthed this specially interesting one. He led the way himself to the side-chapel where he believed the painting to be, but lo! a hideous modern daub hung over the little altar and his face fell. Then he had an inspiration: in spite of the man's remonstrances he went up the steps and peered behind the gaudy painting.

"Tell him I'll pay him to help me get this thing

down," he said: "I believe what I want is at the back of it."

Then my altercation began.

We were mad English, and one couldn't behave in a Church as if it were a shop.

But "mad English" or not we were also "rich English" (in the custodian's eyes), and a very little English gold won the day: we saw the picture we wanted.

These were only a few instances of the "tonic of a young man's conceit and obstinacy"—to use Joe's own chaff of himself—in that never-to-be-forgotten journey through the highways and byways of Northern Italy. Everything was grist that came to his mill in this as in each separate field of his activities; but Florence was the real goal of all his desires, and this first visit to it, close on the study which had made him long to see for himself the Masters whom he loved and the fairest of towns which was their home, had a glamour which was never quite reached in later visits. I can see again the poor *Trattoria della Luna* where we lodged and the handsome waiter whom we, in the wild enthusiasm of the hour, persuaded to follow us to England. That he ever arrived at all was the marvel. He might well have spent the journey-money given him on pastimes suggested by his reproach to me in London afterwards as to engaging a cook who remembered the birth of Christ: that he arrived weeping in a November fog and bitterly resenting having been left to come "by sea when we had come by land," was not wonderful. Joe was patient with him for my sake and

many a funny tale did he forge out of the Italian's vagaries.

But when this unkempt Adonis had demoralized our maid, smashed our pretty wedding gifts in fits of gloom, during which he would shake his fist at the fog and say : "Goo' nigh'," and finally taunted us with not providing sufficient wine at a humble entertainment to excuse one of the guests for having left his hat behind, we felt it best he should return to his native land—though not before he had inadvertently half poisoned us with dried mushrooms sent by his relatives.

Well, badly as Mario behaved subsequently in Great Russell Street he was one of the features of our happy Florence holiday and directed our steps towards many out-of-the-way places which Joe thirsted to explore in search of Art treasures unknown to guide-books.

My husband's knowledge culled from many old books was of great value to him, and with his bump of locality, joined to my knowledge of the speech of the people, we penetrated into many lovely corners and met with as many amusing adventures.

Strange food did we eat too on that weird trip, for here, as elsewhere, Joe insisted on exploring.

"Tell him I'm a judge of the *cuisine*," he would say, "and only want the best." And—with an instinct that the rewarding tip would not be wanting—as it never was—cooks hastened to concoct the spiciest of their national dishes for his criticism.

The publication of Joe's first book was quickly followed by an illustrated volume on the Abbey

Church of St. Albans from articles written for the *Art Journal*; plenty of study on architecture and on monkish lore was done for this in the Reading Room of the British Museum. Later in life Joe used to say that, after the period of ravenous and enthusiastic boyhood, he might never have opened a serious book again—so much more enthralling to him was the daily intercourse for work or play with living men and women—had it not been for the necessity of boiling the pot; and that all that he read for a special purpose stuck to him as no desultory reading did and became stored in his mind for use and pleasure for the rest of his life.

I can see myself how true this was in respect of the whole range of Arthurian legend, on which subject he became an authority; he devoured everything in English and French that he could find when he was writing his plays of *King Arthur* and *Tristram*, and never forgot any of it.

The *Abbey of St. Albans* was too special a subject to make a popular book, and the first volume of Joe's work which attracted attention was *Essays on Art*, gathered together in 1879.

I remember that, just as among his published work in verse he held that his *Tristram and Iseult* was his best, so he considered the Essay—practically on Keats, who held, I think, the highest place with him among the nineteenth century poets but entitled *The Artistic Spirit in Modern English Poetry*, he judged to be among his most satisfactory prose; with the exception of the *Essay on Macbeth*, written as a pamphlet at the time of Henry Irving's production of the play, and now re-published under

the title of *Sex in Tragedy* in his book *Coasting Bohemia*.

A letter which he wrote me later from France, when he was studying the provincial museums there for a series of articles in the *Manchester Guardian*, bears out pleasantly the criticism in the article on *Corot and Millet* in *Essays on Art*.

LIMOGES,

August 1882.

“ The landscape of the Loire somewhat disappointed me, although the towns are full of interest. Very fruitful the country seems to be, overflowing with corn and vine but far stretching and unvaried with a vague sense of melancholy in it that is almost oppressive. It is impossible to catch even a passing view of such country as lies between Orléans and Nantes without turning in thought from the landscape to the people who dwell in it ; and the picture that is left in the mind of the daily life of these peasants who labour all day in fields that have no break or limit save where patches of corn alternate with spaces of vine, is strangely touching and sad. It wanted a France such as France is on the borders of the Loire to produce the solemn and austere sentiment of Millet, and I hardly think one understands the stern reality of his work until one has passed through miles and miles of this fruitful and uneventful land.

The later passages of to-day's journey were a delightful change in the character of the scenery ; a narrower river (The Vienne) but more sympathetic,

with happy-looking green pastures and hilly banks.

This place stands high and the air is delightfully fresh. It has an industrial museum which is important in connection with my work.

I visited Chambord also Chenonceau. They are both much restored and inferior in interest to Blois, which is a most delightful place in every way."

In respect of Blois he writes as follows in another letter: "This town is more picturesque than any French town I have yet seen; most of it, or the older part of it at any rate, is high up on a hill, and the steps that mount up between the different streets are very beautifully contrived.

Tell Phil I should like him to read the parts of his French history connected with Blois, particularly about Henri III. and the Duke of Guise, and I will tell him about the wonderful castle when I get back."

I remember he brought home some excellent photographs of that castle and the lovely outer staircase of the tower.

Another letter written during this French journey brings in a more humorous note: "Toulouse is a real city of the south, its market place covered with big red umbrellas reminding one of Verona, and the old hotel having a pleasant shady courtyard with pots of oleanders. . . . It is difficult to give you much news. I was thinking this morning how funny it was how little I had spoken English since I left home, once with the manager of a travelling English panorama at Limoges and yesterday at Montauban where I met a Frenchman who insisted

upon speaking my native tongue to me. He declared that he knew English 'au fond,' but his mastery of the tongue was not complete. 'Good voyage, have distraction,' were his parting words to me."

These good wishes were not entirely fulfilled. The day after his arrival at Toulouse Joe had been overcome by the August heat and mosquito bites, and had been obliged to take to his bed for a day in the fine old inn, where he was admirably nursed by the motherly landlady; and, as he sat in the cool courtyard next day he was vastly amused by the discomfiture of a fat commercial traveller, awaiting his *déjeuner* with napkin tucked in ready under his chin, when a one-legged old stork, who perambulated the garden, suddenly uttered its raucous note: "Quel cri épouvantable!" exclaimed the poor gentleman, and jumping up he overturned the small table on which a succulent Southern dish now steamed ready for his consumption, and wept afresh at the sight of gravy and red wine trickling together down the coarse clean tablecloth!

I think merriment must have hampered Joe's offers of assistance, and his French was not then as fluent as he made it in after years.

Anyhow the commercial traveller appears to have been less genial than was a gentleman in the train later on who thought to flatter him by comparing him to the then Prince of Wales: "Les mêmes traits, la même barbe, le même âge!" said he pleasantly, not thinking that he was speaking to a man years younger than Edward VII.

But if there was a momentary annoyance it was immediately forgotten by Joe in a lively, if halting,

conversation on the merits of a trout stream which the train was skirting—Joe vehemently describing how different was our view regarding poachers with the net, and mentally despising his fellow-traveller for upholding the equal merits of perch, gudgeon and trout.

When they reached Lourdes the traveller again afforded Joe a fresh cause for wonder—unfamiliar as he then was with what later he called “the Frenchman’s unfailing desire to place himself in a category.”

The station was crammed with pilgrims to the Holy Wells, and Joe, innocent of this, asked for what event the crowd was gathered; whereupon the Frenchman, turning his head contemptuously from the window, said loftily: “*Monsieur, dans ma qualité d’Athée je ne connais rien de tout cela !*”

Even in those early days he loved the French; their joy of living appealed to him as it did in all the Latin races, and their wit—more subtle and polished than the Italian’s child-like though not childish high spirits—was akin to his own, and it was often wonderful how swiftly he would “get the hang of it” even when sometimes he would appeal to me for translation of a word; while their shrewd and clear common-sense found an echo somewhere on another side of him, perhaps in his Border ancestry.

Yet I have heard him say that, in his opinion, the deeper courtesy of an unspoiled Italian—were he peasant or peer—came out of a further and finer civilization.

These travelling conversations, even in a foreign tongue, were entirely in keeping with Joe's intensely human temperament. He had none of the aloofness of the Britisher of that day ; and I remember his amusement at the talk of a party of English shop-keepers in a second-class railway carriage on the Paris-Calais route.

"To see them working men forced to sit and smoke their pipe in the street for a breath of fresh air on a summer evening fairly flummuxed me," said one. "Why the poorest of *us* 'ave got a bit of a back-yard."

Though he was the most reserved of men as regards deep, personal matters, he found that sort of sentiment was utterly ridiculous to his Irish sense of humour.

I recollect hearing Joe whimsically tell a friend once that he would far sooner confide his most intimate concerns to a man in a train than to his nearest and dearest ; and then he would recall (or invent ?) the most humorous conversations which he had overheard or in which he had taken part, chiefly on the physical ills of life during long journeys in dark railway carriages. I don't suppose he went these lengths in French ; probably his vocabulary was not equal to it.

He said he missed my help on that Loire journey although I think he liked learning for himself too. I certainly, sitting in a tiny cottage near Witley with my sister and the two children, missed my opportunity and sighed to be with him, especially when his letter home contained a passage like this :

"Marseilles is a city with something of romantic

suggestion about it. One feels that it is one of the Avenues of the East, one of the places also that connects the old world with the new. It was terribly hot, but the sea tempered the sun and the sea-bath in the evening was a delicious revenge for the heat of the day. The view over the Mediterranean at sunset is delightful, with an atmosphere that seems to be stained with rose colour floating over a sea of real aquamarine."

I had to solace myself with taking Phil to sit for his portrait to Edward Burne-Jones—delightful occasions when that most lovable of great men would talk of my husband and of their kindred enthusiasms, chaffing me gently as well for the "wicked travesties" of classic myths with which I tried to keep quiet the "worst of little sitters," who would innocently ask why his standing pose was called "sitting."

And at last Joe came home, only about a week before our son Arthur was born.

These travelling memories are a digression induced by their bearing on my husband's first published volumes. As to his subsequent contributions to permanent literature I may mention his *Papers on Art*—a sequel to the *Essays on Art*—published in 1885.

After that, until the last years of his life, his many vocations so entirely filled every hour of the day—and often of the night—that he had no leisure for any more such ventures, excepting the publication of his verse-plays as they appeared on the stage.

And it was not until 1908 that he once more came

before the book-reading public. Then he wrote his two separate volumes of personal recollections under the titles of *Eminent Victorians* and *Coasting Bohemia*; but these are of recent enough date to need no comment of mine, for they are still before the world, as is also his posthumously published volume, *The Ideals of Painting*.

CHAPTER VII

THE GROSVENOR AND THE NEW GALLERIES

IN the autumn of the year 1876 we were invited to Sir Coutts Lindsay's Scottish seat at Balcarres, where Joe's collaboration with Mr. C. E. Hallé as Director of the Grosvenor Gallery in Bond Street was fixed and led later to the long co-operation of these two friends in their New Gallery Exhibitions.

Sir Coutts's venture was to start in the following May, and there was much to discuss and settle at that shooting party ; yet not so much as to interfere with plenty of fun by the way.

It was on this visit that Prince Leopold was a guest at the house and I vividly recall a series of *tableaux vivants* got up for his entertainment, in which Joe played a part he was often to fill later—that of stage manager, combined on this occasion with the office of *Dresser*, in which capacity he “corked” a moustache on His Royal Highness' face for an impersonation of Charles I.

There were anxious moments—such as when the Prince's tights did not arrive from Edinburgh, or when Sir Arthur Sullivan, after nobly seconding Joe's efforts with his incidental music, flatly refused

to abandon his cigar at a late hour to play waltzes ; or again, on the following Sunday morning when—the crimson cloth being laid ready at the Episcopalian Church—a belated telegram arrived from Windsor commanding H.R.H.'s attendance at Presbyterian worship. But I think Joe's unconventional and merry wit—even in those early days when he might have felt strange in that kind of society—helped away many a little ruction, and the fun that he made of himself as “one of the lower middle class” little used to the ways of great houses was much appreciated by Arthur Sullivan, “Dicky Doyle” and others claiming kinship with the “Bohemians,” yet used to the habits at which he pretended to be alarmed.

I can see the twinkle in the eye with which he stoutly declared that a French Chef did not necessarily beget a sure taste in the hosts, and the corroboration given to his statement by the sight of some twenty docile people eating a salad that had been mixed with methylated spirit in mistake for vinegar without turning a hair.

I think Arthur Sullivan—who was an *habitué*—expostulated with the butler about it, when the cause of the “odd taste” was run to earth and laid to the account of the kitchenmaid.

These Balcarres days began for us that series of social gatherings so well known later as the Grosvenor Gallery Sunday afternoons, at which Lady Lindsay presided over a company including all the most notable people in Literature and Art, to say nothing of the “beaux noms,” courtiers and politicians in her more exclusive set.

Those most entertaining parties and the Private Views both at the Grosvenor Gallery and, later on, at the New Gallery in Regent Street, were among the season's features of that period, and invitations to both of them were eagerly sought by all classes of Society. Especially in the earlier years the vagaries in dress assumed by some of the women of the "Artistic" and Theatrical Set were, and I fear often justly, matters for merriment to those of the fashionable world who fitly displayed the last modes from Paris ; and I hear again the softly sarcastic tones of a society lady commenting on the clinging draperies of a pretty artist "finished by a pair of serviceable boots."

Yet there were those among the leaders of the *élite* who chose to wear garments following the simpler and more graceful patterns of some bygone era ; and I am bound to say that these were often among the most beautiful toilettes present and those which Joe then most admired.

But much strenuous work preceded the days of the Private Views. Early in the career of the Grosvenor Gallery, Joe, steeped in the work of the Old Masters of which he had made such a special study, persuaded Sir Coutts Lindsay to have an exhibition of their drawings—culled from the great collections of England ; and many a pleasant visit did he have to fine country houses on this quest.

Once he arrived after a night journey at the seat of Lord Warwick just as the men of the house-party were met in the hall for the day's "shoot," and I can fancy the merry excuse with which he

surely fitted the occasion as he presented himself bare-headed, having left his hat in the train when he sleepily changed carriages at the junction; luckily he was well provided with natural covering.

Plenty of his Celtic persuasiveness must have come into play—both on this occasion and on those when the fine shows of Paintings by Old Masters were made—in cajoling the owners to lend their priceless treasures, and I recollect one or two very anxious moments over transport, etc.

But this first ambitious Exhibition of *Drawings* exceeded, both in bulk and excellence, anything previously attempted in London and attracted the enthusiastic attention of all connoisseurs; the hanging and cataloguing involved immense labour, and I was proud to be allowed to take a small share in the last part of the work—an opportunity in which I learnt much which I have never forgotten.

When, some few years later, my husband and Mr. Hallé started their independent enterprise in Regent Street, their sole responsibility made the work none the less arduous though naturally less hampered.

The first task—exciting as it was—was a Herculean one, for the New Gallery was practically built upon the site of an old fruit-market, and an anxious winter was that, lest it should not be completed in time for an opening with the other May Exhibitions. But completed it was and handsomely; though the last touch, the gilding of the rails of the gallery which overhung the Central Court, was only finished through Joe inducing the frame-gilders to work with the builders' men—an infringement of custom

which, it seemed, only the affection which they bore him induced them to overlook.

The effect of that Central Court with its fountain fringed with flowers and its arcade panelled with fine, coloured marbles, was one of the sensations of the day, and deserved the praise of a critic : " It is an Aladdin's Palace sprung up in the night." Joe has spoken of this first Exhibition in *Eminent Victorians* ; suffice it, therefore, to say that the Burne Jones and Watts' pictures were the distinguishing features, as they always were so long as these great men survived.

As years went on, the collecting of works among the lesser artists for the modern yearly Exhibition became more and more irksome to Joe, and the rounds that he and Mr. Hallé used to make to the artists' studios were something of a penance to him.

Not only were they physically fatiguing, but the difficulties of choice, of obtaining what they desired and of refusing what they didn't desire without undue offence to the artist, taxed the patience of both directors and, I think, Joe's wit was often needed to turn a dangerous corner.

" Good isn't the word," he once answered to a sympathiser who asked him what he said when confronted with a thoroughly bad picture ; and, although this too transparent form of salve may not really have been uttered, I am told that the kindly chaff which he would sometimes expend upon the shameless offer of a poor painting from a man who knew what he was doing but meant to send his best work to take its chance elsewhere, was such

as might not have "gone down" from anyone else but Joe Carr.

Yet there were pleasant hours even on these days of weary rounds. In each of the districts visited the directors were sure to count at least one firm friend, anxious to lighten the road; in Kensington it was Burne Jones, who, speaking of his young daughter, wrote on one occasion: "In my wife's absence, Margaret dispenses middle-class hospitality with a tact and finish worthy of a higher sphere." In St. John's Wood it was Alma Tadema—most hospitable of hosts—always ready with a bottle of his best wine and some funny tale uttered in his quaint English, and admirably seconded by his charming wife at the long, narrow table loaded with old Dutch silver and lovely curios.

And upon the onerous occasions of the varnishing days when the positions on the line were supposed to be the right of every exhibitor, these and other leaders in the world of art would often "stand by" even when some incensed young gentleman—these were usually young gentlemen—would go the length of removing his picture in a four-wheeler.

Many were the humorous incidents that used to be told to me! A favourite and out-spoken assistant was once asked what he thought of the position of a small picture which was being tried above a larger one; to which his reply was: "If you ask me, Sir, I think it looks like a tom-tit on a round of beef." Apparently the directors thought so too for the picture was removed and hung in a corner, or perhaps in the balcony above the Central Court—a place even less coveted by the ambitious.

Little however did *I* know of these prickly passages, specially at that momentous first opening, when a kind supporter of the new enterprise presented me with a beautiful old brocade dress in which I took my share of receiving the crowds of visitors at the entrance of the Hall: and I don't think that, when the varnishing day was past, the two directors bothered their heads much about the prickly passages or even about the Press opinions. Joe's optimism was always irrepressible and when his task at the New Gallery was over, he would turn, on the following day—with something perhaps of relief—to one of the many other sides of his full life.

CHAPTER VIII

DRAMATIC WORK AND MANAGEMENT

It must have been somewhere about this period that the first impetus was, funnily enough, given to Joe's dramatic career by a request from our dear friend, Ellen Terry, that I should make an English adaptation for her from the famous French play of *Frou-Frou*.

The thing was done, and played in Glasgow and other Northern towns under the title of *Butterfly*, and great fun we had over our first initiation into the mysteries of dress-rehearsals—not always perhaps quite so funny in the more responsible circumstances of later years, though it is a form of patient work electrified by the gambling spirit, which never lost its attraction for Joe.

My altered version of the French play was a poor one, but it had, I suppose, sufficient merit to obtain me a commission from Mme. Modjeska, the noted Polish actress, for a free translation of the same play, which she performed first in London with Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson and afterwards throughout the United States.

The "youthful conceit" to which Joe was throughout his life so lenient as even to consider a

virtue, led me presently to try my hand at a bigger task—no less than the dramatisation of Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. I was quite unequal to the attempt, and I only mention it because it proved the beginning of Joe's dramatic work. He took the play in hand, refashioned the plot, only keeping portions of the dialogue as I had adapted it to stage necessity ; and it was produced—with Marion Terry as the wilful and charming Bathsheba—first in the provinces and then in London.

Owing to circumstances needless to recall, the venture was a financial failure ; but it served to start Joe on a new road ; and it was not long before he scored a big success. He came home one night from a railway journey and gave me a little book which he had bought to read in the train : it was *Called Back* by Hugh Conway.

“ See if you don't think that an enthralling story ? ” he said.

There could be no doubt of this and the British public gave its verdict promptly. The book began to sell like “ hot cakes ” and Joe went down to Clifton, saw its clever author—until then unknown to literature—and arranged with him for its dramatisation.

The play was produced on May 20th, 1884, and I think there are still people who remember its first success and that, in the rôle of the Italian conspirator—Macari—Sir Herbert Tree scored one of his finest early triumphs ; the piece was revived several times in London and the provinces and had the questionable compliment of being also pirated. But I shall not easily forget the dress-rehearsal !

I was comparatively new to such things then and I can well recall the chill of heart with which we got home to Blandford Square in the early hours and my inner conviction that the scenery could not possibly be finished nor, one at least, of the principal actors, know his part by the next night! But nothing could ever quell Joe's hopeful spirit; he plied his somewhat less optimistic colleague with cold tongue and whisky-and-soda and made merry work of the stupidity of limelight men and scene-shifters, to say nothing of others of higher degree; and then went to sleep at 6 a.m. and got up and returned to the theatre at 10 a.m. without turning a hair.

I wonder now if he was as strong as he seemed in those days or whether it was only his gay and excitable Celtic temperament that carried him through everything. Anyhow he enjoyed his life to the full and there were never any dull moments, whether he was at work or at play.

The radiant vitality which lasted him so long and so well—and to which there is such frequent testimony in letters from the various friends with whom he laboured in his many walks of life—seems to have had the power of so communicating itself to his fellow-workers that they would share his optimistic hopes and, if these were disappointed, generally be ashamed to utter reproach in the face of his urbane acceptance of failure. But on this occasion there was only rejoicing.

In a letter of his, replying to Hugh Conway's generous recognition of help, I find these words:

"I want to tell you how much touched I have been by your letters. I say 'letters' for my wife

read me as much of your note as she thought good for me. Rest assured that I am delighted to have done what I have done—also that the result has been fortunate for us both. I don't think I could have got through so well with any other man ; with you I have never had a shadow of worry or annoyance and I have been able at all points to do my best—as far as I knew how."

This happy venture led to a friendship which had no let until the untimely death of Hugh Conway in the very zenith of his fame ; they were, as dear old Sir Alma Tadema said in his quaint English : " Very fat together—like two hands on one stomach."

Yet they did much work together, for not only did Joe collaborate again with Hugh Conway in the adaptation of *Dark Days* for the stage, but he also published that gifted, ghoulish tale *Paul Vargus* during his editorship of *The English Illustrated Magazine*, as well as the serial entitled *A Family Affair*, a humorous and urbane story with a plot so delicately suggesting possible immorality, however, that it drew down upon the editor a sharp reproach from Mrs. Grundy, who declared that, although she believed all would " come right " she could never again allow the magazine to lie on her drawing-room table lest her well-brought-up daughters might open its pages.

Does that Mrs. Grundy still live to-day ?

Dark Days was Joe's last bit of work with his poor friend but by no means the last of his adaptations for the stage, the chief of which number *Madame Sans Gêne* for Sir Henry Irving ; *My Lady of Rosedale* for Sir Charles Wyndham ; *Nerves*

which ran with success for some time at the Comedy Theatre, and last, but not at all least, his fine play fashioned on Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and followed by one on *Edwin Drood*.

The former, with Sir Herbert Tree as *Fagin*, Constance Collier as *Nancy* and Lyn Harding as *Sikes*, held the public for many months both in London and the United States.

At the height of its London success, a flaw in the architecture of the central proscenium arch of His Majesty's Theatre necessitated the temporary transference of the play to another house. Joe was naturally in despair, but the untoward incident in no way interfered with the run of the piece which—in the words of the stage manager—had been kicked up and down the Strand and only gathered force as it rolled.

But although I have spoken first of his adaptations, it is of his original plays that I hold the dearest memories; and first and foremost of *King Arthur* which contains some of the best of the lyrics and blank verse for which Theodore Watts Dunton held him to be a "true poet." The *May Song* and *Song of the Grail* he placed himself among his best verse and they were well appreciated.

As the book was published by Messrs. Macmillan, it belongs to the public.

The production of *King Arthur* was one of the most beautiful of Henry Irving's many Lyceum triumphs. Even in those far-removed days Sir Edward Burne Jones' exquisite designs for the armour and dresses, as well as for the scenery, will be remembered by some, and I am proud to think that I was allowed

the privilege of carrying out some of them in detail. It was a hard six months' work but it was well rewarded and I think Joe had no happier hours than those he spent in the writing and in the producing of his two finest efforts—*King Arthur* and *Tristram and Iseult*.

I cannot leave this subject without mention of the tender and lovely impersonation of *Guinevere* by Ellen Terry, and the touching tribute to her which Joe himself gives in the following dedication, written on the fly-leaf of the copy he presented to her.

“To Guinevere herself from one who, after years of closest friendship, looks to her now as always, for the vindication of what is highest and gentlest in womanhood ; and who would count this not too poor a gift for her to take, could he but hope that some part of the grace and charm of her spirit had found its way into the portrait of Arthur's Queen.”

Following on this it would seem incongruous in connection with anyone else but Joe to quote a funny tale bearing on the above ; but Joe loved the tale himself and often told it merrily and so will I.

On his being presented to a newly-arrived prominent American at a public dinner, this gentleman opened the conversation by saying that he had been privileged, on the voyage with Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, to read *King Arthur* in the lady's own copy containing the author's charming dedication. A pause ensued, when Joe—thinking himself on solid ground—said : “ Well, sir, I hope you liked the play ? ” What was his astonishment at the Yankee's gentle reply ! “ Wall, not very much ! ” said he, “ You see I had Lord Tennyson in my mind.”

Silence ensued but I think Joe explained with urbanity that he had taken an entirely different view of the old legend, founded in a measure on Sir Thomas Malory's version.

A *propos* of this old name, Joe has himself told of the arrival at the theatre of a batch of press cuttings addressed to that knight of the days of chivalry, the title tactfully supplemented by the affix of "Bart."

Perhaps scarcely less funny and more unpardonable was the question of the Society lady who asked him, in the case of *Tristram and Iseult*, how he had obtained Mme. Wagner's consent to tamper with her husband's book.

A play—*The Lonely Queen*—on which he spent much care, still remains to be performed when a suitable actress shall present herself for the strong and sympathetic part of the girlish ruler over a wild land.

The piece opens on a hill-side overlooking an Eastern city—a scene shewn again later on in sinister circumstances; and with dance and laughter, a group of girls crown their wayward young mistress with a wreath of flowers in merry mimicry of the weightier diadem she will soon be called to wear. And presently, in a lonely mood of apprehension, she meets as a stranger, the patriot-poet who is to be both her bane and her salvation in the future.

He enjoyed writing this play and was pleased with the following lyric, which he read to me—as I am proud to think, he generally read anything with which he was satisfied or on which he wanted

such criticism as I could give—on the very morning when he had written it.

THE POET TO A GIRL-QUEEN UNKNOWN.

OH Lady of the Lily Hand !

Whose face unseen we long to greet,
At whose command this desert land
Springs into flower about thy feet.

Fair maiden whom we know not yet,
Yet know thy heart can know no fear,
Queen, who shalt teach us to forget
The wounds of many a wasted year.

The curtains of the night are drawn,
Its shadows all have fled away,
For in thine eyes there dwells the dawn
And in thy smile the new born day.

A people's love that waits thee now
Is thine to take and thine to hold,
Till God shall set upon thy brow
A crown that is not forged of gold.

Twixt Right and Wrong He yields thee choice,
Heed not the worship of the weak,
That in a maiden's fearless voice
The clarion voice of God may speak.

Be swift to strike and strong to save,
Steadfast in all ! Till all the land
Shall hail thee 'Bravest of the Brave'
Oh Lady of the Lily Hand.

It was a fair scene in which it was written—a hill-top under Monte Rosa overlooking the lovely shores of Lugano—and, though he always said that actual surroundings were never proper to be described in the work of the moment but must be digested and crystallized in the hidden corners of remembrance, I think that the spirit of a place did influence him, so that the sun shone on the hillside of the first Act of *The Lonely Queen* as the lowering brow of the Black Mount, at Rannoch, seemed to overshadow the halls of Camelot; he even said himself that he could see the barge with Elaine's body float down the Hertfordshire stream where he was wont to fish after his day's labour.

His poetical work was always that which lay nearest his heart, though his friends often deplored that he did not devote himself more to comedy; but strange to say, his humour, which was so inexhaustible in colloquial intercourse, did not strike home so surely in his stage dialogue: he needed the stimulus of conversation. Possibly he felt this, which made him shyer of comedy-writing than he would have been; in *Nerves* he was witty enough and there is a very deft comedy scene for two old ladies in *Forgiveness*, produced at the "St. James' " Theatre by Sir George Alexander. His first attempts at dramatic work, made on the tiny stage of German Reed's, were entirely in quaint comedy.

I think a free rendering of a fancy of Hugh Conway's on the Blue-and-White China Craze was one of the first things he did for the stage and it contained some charming lyrics after the Elizabethan manner which won instant recognition.

I quote three of them, for they were never printed for the public.

From *The United Pair*.

DUET : SONG OF THE TWO CHINA-
COLLECTORS.

SEXTUS.

A love like mine is far above
The thing that we are told is love,
In Shakespeare or in Chaucer.
For while they are content to praise
The famous forms of classic days,
I revel in the form and glaze,
Of one unrivalled saucer.

VIRGINIA.

Ah sir, I know the thought is vain,
Yet if a man were porcelain,
Then love would be the master ;
If only in a single night
Your face could change to blue and white,
I think at such a glorious sight
My heart would beat the faster.

VIRGINIA AND SEXTUS.

And such a love were far above
The thing that we are told is love,
In Shakespeare or in Chaucer ;
For while they are content to praise
The famous forms of classic days,
We revel in the form and glaze,
Of every cup and saucer.

SEXTUS.

Ah madam, if that dream were true,
 How easy would it be to woo,
 And never fear the winning ;
 If woman also could be graced
 With all the silent charms of paste,
 Then love could never be misplaced,
 And hate have no beginning.

VIRGINIA.

Then every vase would find its mate,
 Each dish would woo a neighbouring plate,
 Each bowl would wed a beaker ;
 And if perchance, through pride or pique,
 Some youth or maid should fail to speak,
 Each bachelor would be unique,
 And each old maid uniquer.

VIRGINIA AND SEXTUS.

And such a love were far above
 The thing that we are told is love,
 In Shakespeare or in Chaucer ;
 For while they are content to praise
 The famous forms of classic days,
 We revel in the form and glaze,
 Of every cup and saucer.

The following duet bore a charming promise of the maturer work that was to follow in wider spheres.

From *The United Pair*.

Played at Mr. and Mrs. German Reed's about 1880.

I.

ADA.

What Love was yesterday, we both could tell ;

JACK.

What Love may be to-morrow, who can guess ?

ADA.

What Love is now both Jack and I know well ;

JACK.

But that's a secret lovers ne'er confess.

JACK AND ADA.

But this we know, that Love is much maligned
By those who call him deaf, and dumb, and blind.

II.

ADA.

Yet Love was dumb : 'tis but an hour ago
I spied him 'mid the daisies as I passed,
Like a pale rose-leaf on new fallen snow
He lay with drooping lids and lips shut fast.

And though the birds sang, Love made no reply,
 He had no message for the whispering stream,
 He sent no echoing answer to the sky,
 That laughed with dancing shadows o'er his dream.
 Then kneeling down beside him where he lay,
 I wept aloud for grief that Love was dead ;
 But when Jack came and kissed my tears away,
 Love spoke one word : we both heard what he said.

JACK AND ADA.

Therefore we say that Love is much maligned,
 For he is neither deaf, nor dumb, nor blind.

III.

JACK.

Yet Love was deaf : 'twas only yesterday
 I found him fishing down beside the brook,
 His rod a snowy branch of flowering may,
 Whose spiny thorn he fashioned for a hook.
 Small heed had he of any lover's pain,
 Who would not hear the cuckoo's ringing note,
 I cried to him, but cried alas in vain,
 He only laughed to watch the dancing float ;
 And while I wept to see him laughing so,
 I heard a voice that whispered one sweet word
 Ah Ada, tell me was it " yes " or " no " ?
 She answered " yes " and then I knew Love
 heard.

JACK AND ADA.

Therefore we say that Love is much maligned,
 For he is neither deaf, nor dumb, nor blind.

IV.

JACK AND ADA.

Yet Love was blind : for so he lost his way,
And so we found him when the day was done,
Within a wood where happy lovers stray,
There he had wandered weeping and alone.
Then wondering much, we thought to ask his name,
But Love replied : “ Ah, surely ye should know ! ”
And as he spake, beneath his wings of flame
We saw Love’s arrows and his glittering bow,
“ For you,” he cried, “ the way is strewn with
flowers,
You’ve found the path that I shall never find.”
Then looking up we saw Love’s eyes in ours,
And then we knew why men do call him blind.

Therefore we know that Love is much maligned,
By all who call him deaf, and dumb, and blind.

From *The Naturalist*.

A SONG OF PROVERBS.

I KNOW that truth's stranger than fiction,
 And I fancy I don't stand alone,
 If I cling to an old predilection,
 For killing two birds with one stone ;
 I never shed tears that are bitter
 Over milk that I know to be spilt,
 And whenever gold happens to glitter
 I make up my mind that its gilt ;
 Yet the riddle of life grows no clearer,
 And still broken-hearted I yearn
 For the season that never draws nearer—
 When a worm may take courage and turn.

And if for a moment I wander
 Into themes more profound and abstruse,
 To note that the sauce for a gander
 Is also the sauce for the goose ;
 That one man is free to steal horses,
 While another is punished by fate,
 Who shuns all such virtuous courses,
 And dares to look over a gate,—
 It is but for the sake of forgetting
 What gives me far greater concern,
 It is but with a view of abetting
 A worm in its efforts to turn.

I could live and not care in the slightest
 To know when a dog had his day,
 And though the sun shone at its brightest,
 I could let other people make hay.

I could perish without ascertaining
Why pearls should be cast before swine,
I could die without ever complaining
That one stitch will never save nine ;
And though I once had the ambition
A candle at both ends to burn,
The old craving might go to perdition
If I knew that a worm had its turn.

These little pieces were admirably rendered by Mr. Alfred Reed and his company, and they won instant success.

I can see Mr. Clement Scott's delighted face just under my box on the first night of *The United Pair* and hear his burst of laughter at the concluding line of the "Song of the China Collectors."

But the one of the three comediettas upon which Joe spent the most pleasant care was *The Friar*—a little thirteenth century fancy of his own invention and for which he wrote the following verses, giving charming expression to the pique of a high-born damsel towards her proud lover and the sorrow of the shepherd swain who becomes the favourite of an hour.

THE LADY ISOBEL'S SONG.

OH, if I be a lady fair,
 I'll weep for no lord's frown,
 And if my lord should ride away,
 I'll put aside my silk array
 And take a russet gown.

I'll wear a gown of russet brown,
 And sleep on the grassy sward,
 And when I meet a shepherd swain,
 If he should sigh, I'll sigh again,
 And choose him for my lord.

I'll choose a shepherd for my lord,
 Though I be a lady fair,
 And when the woods are golden brown,
 Of yellow leaves I'll weave a crown,
 And bind his golden hair.

Then my false lord shall cry and weep,
 And call his lady fair,
 But though for love his heart should bleed,
 His sighs and tears I will not heed,
 Nor hearken to his prayer.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE LADY.

ISOBEL.

SHEPHERD, if thou wouldst learn to woo a maid
In Love's own way,
Follow young Cupid to the hawthorn shade
Some day in May,
And bid him tell thee true
What way were best to woo ;
What a poor swain should do
When maids say nay.

HUBERT.

Ah ! could I find the bower where Love doth dwell
Beneath the May,
And could I plead to him, I know full well
What Love would say.
For he would bid me sigh,
And weep, and moan and cry,
And he would bid me die,
For that's Love's way.

ISOBEL.

Hast thou forgotten how in shepherd's guise
One day in May,
Love taught a cruel maid with laughing eyes
To feel Love's sway,
And when she thought to scorn
This lover lowly born
Love did not weep or mourn,
But laughed and turned away,

And singing when she sighed,
 Love wept not when she cried
 He cared not if she died .
 For that's Love's way !

BOTH.

O Love that came but yester eve,
 If thou wilt go before to-morrow,
 Then prithee go, but do not leave
 My saddened heart to die of sorrow.
 If thou wilt hide Love's laughing eyes,
 If we must lose Love's magic spell,
 Then take the burthen of our sighs,
 And we will say Farewell ! Farewell !

THE SHEPHERD'S SONG.

Am wherefore should I try to sing
Of Love that's dead ?
Of Love that came before the Spring
And ere Spring came had fled.
'Tis vain to seek in winter snows
The fallen petals of the rose
'Tis vain to ask the year to bring
The Love that went before the Spring.

Our little world was fair to see
Ere Love had come,
Of earth and sky and flower and tree
I sang while Love was dumb.
But now the strings have all one tone,
Love claims all beauty for his own.
In vain ! in vain ! I can but sing
The Love that went before the Spring.

And as I sing, Love lives again ;
Where'er I go,
His voice is in the summer rain,
His footprints on the snow.
And while October turns to gold,
I dream that April buds unfold,
Ah tell me will the Spring-time bring
The Love that went before the Spring ?

The Shepherd's Song I have heard him say he was as well pleased with as with any of his later and more ambitious verse ; but it is curious to note that, quite unconsciously, he repeated the line

“ But now the strings have all one tone ” in the *Lute Song*, written nearly thirty years after, for *The Beauty Stone*, an opera done in conjunction with Sir Arthur Pinero to Sir Arthur Sullivan’s music.

The book of *The Beauty Stone* was published, but I quote the *Lute Song* for those who did not know it.

THE LUTE’S SONG.

I.

AH, why dost sigh and moan ?
 Ah, why ? ah, why ?
 Queen of the laughing May
 Who wears thy crown to-day ?
 Good-bye ! good-bye !
 Yea, for all mirth hath flown ;
 The strings have all one tone—
 Ah, why ? ah, why ?

II.

It is the lute that sings,
 Not I ! not I !
 Methinks some sleeping heart
 That once had felt Love’s smart
 Doth wake and cry !
 Nay, hark ! ’tis love’s own wings
 That fan the trembling strings—
 Not I ! Not I !

But dainty as is this little song, it does not to my mind equal in charm the duet of the two old lovers in the same opera.

THE OLD LOVERS OFFERING ONE
ANOTHER THE BEAUTY STONE.

SIMON.

I WOULD see a maid who dwells in Zolden—
Her eyes are soft as moonlight on the mere ;
The spring hath fled, the ripened year turns golden—
Shall I win her ere the waning of the year ?
The reaping-folk pass homeward by the fountain ;
What is it then that calls me from the dell,
What bids me climb the path beside the mountain
To the down beyond the sheepfold ? Who can tell ?
Then take it, for this magic stone hath power
To change thee to the fairest ; yet to me
Thou wert fairest as I knew thee in that hour
When a maiden dwelt in Zolden ! Ah, take it,
'tis for thee !

JOAN.

I would see a youth who comes from Freyden—
He is straighter than the mountain pine-trees grow ;
Gossips say he comes to woo a maiden,
So the gossips say—but can they know ?
Three laughing maids are in the hollow,
Yet none will set him straight upon his way ;
Nay ! soft ! for he hath found the path to follow—
He is coming ! little heart, what will he say ?
Then take it, for this magic stone hath power
To change thee to the fairest, yet to me
Thou wert fairest as I knew thee in that hour
When a youth came up from Freyden ! Ah,
take it, 'tis for thee !

In the Beauty-Stone Joe was only responsible for the lyrics and parts of the plot. But I know that his idea of the man's true love being first awakened after he became blind was dear to him, and he used it again in his adaptation of *Jekyll and Hyde* for H. B. Irving ; but there it is the wife whose blindness hides from her all but the beautiful side of her husband.

Such were the chief of Joe's plays. Tireless energy was given to the production of them all, for I think it was universally admitted that no one bore the strain of rehearsals as cheerily and patiently as Joe. But these attributes shone equally in his work upon the plays of others produced during his many years of management at the Comedy Theatre, at the Lyceum, after it was taken over by a company, at His Majesty's when producing plays for Sir Herbert Tree, and lastly at Covent Garden, where he arranged the *mise en scène* for *Parsifal* at a time when he was already stricken by failing health.

Many strenuous hours were spent over each of these ventures in the most arduous of professions ; but what I prefer to recall are the gay ones—the merry moments—the unfailing good humour, wit and pleasant jest by which my husband lightened the weary waits with which all who have laboured for the stage are familiar.

“Rome wasn't built in a day,” I can hear him retort cheerfully to some impatient spectator who was grumbling at the long waits during the last rehearsal of *Julius Cæsar* at His Majesty's Theatre ; and none was so ready as his friend the actor-manager, with the appreciative laugh.

Lady Tree—Maud, to us—reminds me of his favourite attitude as he would stand watching the effects of the lighting of his scenes from the empty stalls with his stick passed through his arms behind his back, and his cheery tones uttering the most fearful anathemas against lime-light men and scene-shifters.

One day I said to him : “ Don’t get so angry, Joe, it must tire you out.”

To which he replied with his usual promptness, “ Angry, my dear ! Why, I’m only using the language proper to lime-light men : they understand no other.”

Once at a Christmas rehearsal, when the stage-hands were all rather more tipsy than was generally allowable, he came from the stage, and as he sat down beside me in the stalls he said with a whimsical smile : “ Poor old Burnaby ! He keeps muttering, ‘ Buried a wife o’ Toosday and now, s’elp me, can’t lay my ’and on a hammer.’ ”

He was held in firm affection by his stage-hands just as he was by his New Gallery staff, not forgetting the decorators, and those superior frame-gilders who were only induced by regard for “ the boss ” to work together in completing the balustrade of the balcony during the strenuous last days before the opening of that “ Aladdin’s palace.”

I recollect one of the scene-shifters at His Majesty’s Theatre putting his shoulder out at a rehearsal and Joe taking him to hospital himself ; I should never have known of it but that the man’s quaint expression of gratitude—“ Your gentlemanly

conduct, sir, I never shall forget"—so pleased Joe that he had to repeat it to me.

The humours of these people always delighted him, and I can see his mock-grave face as he told me of the head stage-carpenter's refusal to carry out an order because it was the day upon which: "We're all subservient to Mr. Telbin"—an excuse which Joe, knowing that irascible scene-painter's peculiarities—found sufficient.

No memories are pleasanter to me than those of presentations to us by these working folk. I have a little Old English silver waiter, an inscribed gift from the employés at the Comedy Theatre for our silver wedding; and a ponderous marble clock, also touchingly inscribed, which the foreman of the stage-hands in the Lyceum Company presented to Joe in the library of our Kensington house. The man stood in the centre of the room making a speech, but before it was ended nature prevailed and he concluded hastily: "If I don't set it down somewhere I shall let it drop."

Joe had given instructions to our maid to pay the donor's cab, and when he retired and found it gone, we were all in dismay upon learning that he had left his overcoat in it.

Anecdotes of entertainments in the higher circles of the stage Joe has told himself in his two books of Reminiscences, the most notable of them being Henry Irving's splendid reception to the Rajahs, when the stage and stalls of the Lyceum were transformed into one vast flower-garden in half an hour after the fall of the curtain. But I can add my testimony as to memorable evenings spent at His

Majesty's Theatre and at Sir Henry Irving's supper-table in the " Old Beefsteak Room " of the Lyceum Theatre, when I listened proudly to Joe's brilliant talk or speeches, and was sometimes privileged to act as interpreter between the host and the many distinguished foreigners who graced that board. Liszt, Joachim, Sarasate are names which recur to me among them as musicians ; but, of course, the guests were chiefly actors and actresses, flattered, I think, at the fine welcome from the foremost English Manager.

Booth, Mary Anderson, Mansfield were the foremost Americans, to the latter of whom I remember Irving's grim advice *à propos* of the fatigue of a ventriloquist-voice in a gruesome part : " If it's unwholesome I should do it some other way." Jane Hading, Coquelin, Réjane and, of course, the incomparable Sarah Bernhardt represented the French ; and I think Salvini was the only one from the stage of Italy.

Sarah and our dear Ellen Terry were always great friends, and I call to mind a pretty little passage when they were sitting opposite to one another and Sarah, leaning forward, cried, in response to some gracious word of Nell's : " My darling, there are two peoples who shall never be old—you and me."

The words are still, happily, true at the hour when I write.

Relating to members of the German stage entertained by Sir Henry, the most amusing incident is that related by Joe himself in detail : of the great actor's grim humour in calling upon him suddenly to speak in praise of the Sax-Meiningen

Company, when Joe had innocently told him an hour before that he had been unable to go to any of their performances. Ladies were not present on that occasion, but I was told that Joe's speech was one of the wittiest he ever delivered : there was nothing that so sharpened his rapier as being apparently put at a disadvantage.

I find no mention by himself of a similar occurrence on a different issue. This time Irving had invited the Oxford and Cambridge crews to supper and, being suddenly indisposed, was unable to propose their health. Without even waiting to be asked Joe rose to his feet and, anxious to divert the young men's attention from their host, surpassed himself in exuberant fun, keeping them in a roar of laughter for a quarter of an hour over his alleged uncertainty as to which of the two 'Varsities had secured the honours of the boat-race.

I am told that Joe again acquitted himself well at a dinner given to Arthur Balfour, when Anthony Hope called upon him without notice from the chair to return thanks for his proposed health. I don't know why or how the inspiration came, but "Love" was Joe's topic, and it is easy to imagine what a gracious and merry time he made with the various aspects of this subject.

Of his meetings with Italian actors and actresses Joe does not speak save in the instance of Madame Ristori, for whose genius he had an unsurpassed veneration.

His *Eminent Victorians* contains the tale of an afternoon at her house when she had invited him and one or two of the dramatic critics to hear her

speak *Lady Macbeth's* sleep-walking scene in English with a view to doing it before a British audience.

Her large and sonorous rendering of the line "All the perfumes of Arâbia" delighted him, though he tried to teach her our own insular pronunciation; he was loudly in favour of the public performance in English, which she finally gave, and I shall never forget the awe-inspiring effect of the slow and gentle snoring which she kept running through the whole of the speech.

Joe never admired even Salvini as much, though he revelled in his great voice on the resounding Roman tongue. He made us all laugh one day by mimicking the mincing tones of a Cockney interpreter translating the Italian tragedian's sonorous language when returning thanks for his London welcome at a public dinner.

Eleonora Duse, for whom our Nell had the most ardent admiration, was rarely able, by reason of her frail health, to grace festive occasions after her work; but Joe had one or two interesting meetings with her during the season that she rented one of the theatres that he managed and we were all present together at her pathetic performance of the *Dame aux Camelias*; the next night we witnessed Sarah Bernhardt in the same rôle, and Joe gives an able comparison of the two performances in *Coasting Bohemia*. On the latter occasion a note came round to Nell from the stage saying: "To-night I play for you." And the promise was well kept.

Speaking of Sarah Bernhardt, I recall a happening of the days before Joe was entitled to the con-

sideration due to a theatrical manager ; he had obtained a promise from the famous lady that she would lunch with us in our quiet home and we bade to meet her not by any means our "second-best" friends—to quote a huffed English actor regarding the guests of another evening. We waited an hour with a patient party and then Joe hastened with a cab to fetch the lady, only to be told that she had forgotten the engagement and was in her bath preparing to keep another. I need not perhaps record that Joe's wit was equal to the occasion in pacifying our outraged guests.

He and Sarah became firm friends later, and she had Joe's *King Arthur* translated into French with a view to playing the part of *Lancelot* ; but this intention was never carried out.

So many and various are the memories which crowd upon me connected with the stage that it is quite impossible for me to sift and record them without undue risk of boring any readers I may have. Suffice it to say that I think, of his many occupations, the theatre, whether in writing for it or in labouring at productions upon it, was the one which most entranced and held Joe. Not only did he love every detail of the work, but it brought him in daily contact with all sorts and conditions of men and women, taxed his powers as a leader of them and gave him hourly opportunity for the exercise of his humanizing and inspiring gift : that highest kind of humour which needs no preparation, but is evoked by every little passing incident and has its real might in the love of mankind.

Perhaps I may here quote a portion of an American interviewer's account of a talk with Henry Irving, sent to Joe by J. L. Toole during one of his old friend's long tours in the United States.

“THE WITTIEST MAN IN ENGLAND.”

“Whom do you consider the wittiest man in England to-day?”

“Well, in my opinion, the greatest of our wits is a man of whom very little is known out here. He is Comyns Carr, who wrote *King Arthur* for me.”

“He is a theatrical manager in London, is he not?”

“Yes, at the present he is, but he is a distinguished man in literature as well. A polished essayist and the most sparkling man I have ever met. As an extemporaneous speaker he is delightful.”

“Is he an Irishman?”

“Perhaps he is, originally. Now you speak of it. Do you know if Carr is an Irish name? Comyns is at any rate and then most of our celebrated wits have been Irishmen—our Sheridans and our Goldsmiths?”

With this pleasing tribute to my husband I may fitly close these theatrical reminiscences, though I like to recall that Joe and Henry Irving had appreciations of one another on a graver side to which some pages in *Eminent Victorians* testify, and many are the pleasant holiday hours we spent as his guests both abroad and at home. He used to visit the old-world village of Winchelsea by Rye, where we had a cottage close to the ancient gateway of the town—afterwards sold to Ellen Terry.

But the most notable of our joint trips was that to Nuremberg in search of material for the production of *Faust*. This was the first occasion on which I made a hit with my designing of Ellen Terry's dresses, which I afterwards did for nearly twenty years. Being the only one of the party speaking German, I made many bargains in the shops and on the old market-place chiefly under Joe's direction but also by request of Henry or Nell. She bought me a solid housewife's copper jug in the market, and Joe and I secured an old ivory casket which she accepted from us and in which she kept the gew-gaws in the "Jewel Scene."

She and I had a delightful evening in the old Castle, I having persuaded a little girl-custodian to let us in after hours so that we saw the place in solemn loneliness with the sunset glow reddening the red roofs of the city far below us.

I won the admission by a highly coloured description of the actress in Shakespeare, which the child actually had seen in her own town; and Nell promised her a signed photograph—punctually posted on our return.

This excursion was made while Joe and Henry were away at Rothenburg, which my husband had insisted that Irving must see on account of its unique preservation of untouched city-wall and battlements.

It was a memorable tour, of which Joe tells some interesting anecdotes in *Coasting Bohemia*.

In speaking of the long drives which his host loved and so greatly preferred to any kind of exercise, Joe does not confess, however, how impossible he

found it to keep himself awake. " We sit side by side and sleep for hours ! " he would tell me regretfully when he came home. And I don't suppose it occurred to any of us then that it was the best rest that tired theatrical managers could have.

CHAPTER IX

ENTERTAINMENT

THIS is a topic upon which I touch timidly ; not only because Joe has talked of it himself in *Some Eminent Victorians*, but also because I had, perhaps less than most of his friends, the opportunity to appreciate his gifts as a public, or even a social, entertainer. In the long list of his after-dinner speeches there were not more than half a dozen that I was lucky enough to hear ; and the little corner in the Garrick Club where I know he was wont to sit, quickly attracting thither the most appreciative spirits and keeping them all the evening in a ripple of laughter, was obviously a forbidden spot to me.

I think his celebrity in this matter needs no mention of mine ; but I should like to quote one or two appreciations by distinguished literary men.

The first is in a letter to myself, where Anthony Hope draws a remarkable portrait of him : " He was a great arguer," he writes ; " for while his temper was always serene, his good humour did not blunt the edge of his tongue. Quite recently I have re-read his last book with the keenest appreciation ;

it shows a broad, appreciative mind, and yet one quite clear for values and criterions.

"We have lost a man of rare gifts, a splendid companion, a generous, kindly, gracious friend. One is happy in having known him, happy too in feeling that life was to him a fine thing—a thing he loved, appreciated and used to the utmost. And his name will live—I think that will be proved true—in the memories of men and in their written records of these times.

"He was a figure and a presence amongst us."

Another appreciation is by W. J. Locke and appeared in one of the leading papers:

"In a brief notice like the present it is impossible to dwell on the career of one of the most versatile of our profession. Everything he touched he adorned with his own peculiar sense of artistic perfection. He was an eminent art critic, a theatrical manager with high ideals, an editor of fine discernment, and a distinguished playwright. He was one of the finest after-dinner speakers of his generation, and one of the few men who earned, maintained, and deserved the reputation of a wit. A writer in a recent newspaper article wrongly charged him with being rather a monologist in social talk than a conversationalist. Far from this being the case, no one more fully appreciated and practised the delicate art of conversation. It may be said, perhaps, that he was one of the youngest—he died in his sixty-eighth year—and one of the last of the great Victorians; for though his keen intellect never lost touch with the events and movements of recent years, yet his mental attitude was typically

that of the second half of the nineteenth century in its sturdy radicalism, its search after essentials, its abhorrence of shams, and its lusty enjoyment of what was real and good in life. The honest workman with pen or brush always found at his hands generous praise or encouragement; for the charlatan, or 'Jack Pudding,' as he was fond of terming him, he had no mercy.

"Struggling against grievous physical disability, he died practically in harness. His last book, a treatise on painting, completed but a month or two ago, is said by those privileged to read the proofs, to reveal a vigour unimpaired by illness and an enthusiasm undimmed by age. An arresting and lovable figure has passed from us, one that linked us with a generation of giants whose work was ending when ours began. It is for us, with sadness, to say, *Vale*: but we know that their honoured shades will greet with many an *ave* the advent of 'Joe' Carr on the banks of Acheron."

Two more extracts from letters, I have the permission of the writers to quote. One is from A. E. W. Mason:

"The traits and qualities which come back to me," he writes, are "his boyish spirit, his sense of fun, his swiftness in dropping out of fun and suddenly touching upon great themes with the surest possible touch, his knowledge of Shakespeare, his passion for Dickens," etc. And the other is in the letter of affectionate sympathy written to me at the time of his death by one of the oldest and most valued of his friends, Sir Frederick Macmillan:

"He was one of the most gifted and brilliant

creatures I have ever known, and had such a kindly nature that no one could come across him without loving him.

“I am proud to think that it was my privilege to give him his last literary commission, and that it has resulted in such a fine piece of work in the region in which he had always been a master.”

This allusion is to *The Ideals of Painting*, published posthumously and still before the public.

The following notice appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* :

“The remarkable thing about Mr. Joseph Comyns Carr was that, while his reputation as a talker and after-dinner speaker was made in the late Victorian days, his gift was so genuine and so deep-set in human nature that even in these days when the whole poise of humour is changed, people still spoke of him as our best man. I doubt if anyone could stand the Victorian after-dinner speeches that established reputations, or if Wilde himself would keep the table quiet, but, until near the end, Carr was the person organisers of dinners first thought of when they wanted a toast list that would attract guests. He had a Johnsonian decisiveness and real brilliance of definition, with a freakish fancy and playfulness that at times had much of Henley’s saltiness and ferocity.”

I am bound to say I never heard the ferocity, but then there were ladies present when I was. His chaff was sometimes keen, it is true, and at our friends’ houses I sometimes sat quaking for fear it should give offence; but even I underrated the power of his personality and the deep affection in

which he was universally held, and I did not guess till he was gone the wealth of friends who missed him.

"There should be a monument erected to him for having cheered more folk and made more laughter than anyone did before him," said one ; and so it was even in the less inspiring surroundings of his own home.

My mind goes back to the first frugal little dinners of our early life, given when we had moved from the rooms over the dispensary in Great Russell Street to a proper house in Blandford Square, now the Great Central Railway Station.

He always did his own carving, and later taught our daughter to be nearly as expert as he was at it ; no amount of pleading for the "table decoration" from our handsome parlour-maid would deter him, and she and I had cause to weep over splashed brocade table-centres which were the fashion of the hour.

"What *is* this bird, my dear ?" he asked one night about some moderate-priced game which I thought I had "discovered."

"Hazel-grouse, Joe," faltered I, guessing that some reproof was coming.

"Nasal-grouse, you mean," said he ; promptly adding for my consolation, "She's a bit of a foreigner, you see, so they take her in about our English birds. Never mind, dear ! This bird's muscles are less tough, at all events, than those of your country fowl who walked from Devonshire last week." And he turned to his friends and added : "I can give you nothing but the plainest of food, but I always take a pride in its being the best of its kind."

That was his unfailing word : “ The best is good enough for me ! ” he would say ; and he would go himself to the butcher if the Sunday beef had not been succulent, and say kindly : “ You need not trouble to send me anything but the best.”

That was why his friends set so much store by his gastronomic opinion—he was a great judge of food, he had it both from his Irish mother and his Cumberland father ; he knew good meat when he saw it, as that astute friend of his, the Hertfordshire butcher already mentioned, would tell him ; and no one appreciated this more than the late Lord Burnham. They both agreed that plain fare was always the finest—*but* it must be of the best. A cold sirloin must be served uncut, yet the host of those memorable week-end parties at Hall Barn always knew whether it would be “ prime ” *when* cut and would beg Joe to keep a good portion of his appetite for the tasting of it. Neither of them gave the first place to made-dishes, though Joe could enjoy these when perfect—as they were at that bountiful table.

The made-dishes of unknown cooks he always mistrusted, especially when he had reason to fear that the dinner would be of what he called “ the green-grocer’s and pastry-cook’s ” class ; and I remember his wicked assertion that his “ inside was rattling like a pea in a canister ” with all the tinned food that he had eaten at one such entertainment.

Alas, that he should have been condemned to some of it, through war necessities, at the end of his life !

He would take pains sometimes in instructing me

and our own humble cook in the concoction of some new dish from a good receipt ; but nothing was to be spared in the cost of the necessary ingredients : the soup, fish or *entree* must be made “ of the best,” not forgetting that the “ pig and onion were the North and South poles of cookery ; ” and, I think, he might have added also the oyster.

His Christmas turkey was almost always boiled, after his mother’s Irish method, stuffed with oysters and served with fried pork sausages and a lavish oyster sauce or a *vol-au-vent* of the same ; latterly the oysters always came in a barrel from our kind friend “ Bertie ” Sullivan.

Yes, his friends esteemed him highly as a food expert ; there is a letter from Edward Burne-Jones (quoted, I think, by Joe) in which he begs him to order the dinner for some entertainment of his own. “ Oh, dear Carr, save my honour,” he writes, “ I know no more what dinner to order than the cat on the hearth—less, for she would promptly order mice. Oh, Carr, order a nice dinner so that I may not be quoted as a warning of meanness . . . yet not ostentatious and presuming such as would foolishly compete with the banquets of the affluent. O, Carr, come to the rescue ! ”

This dear friend cared comparatively little for the pleasures of the table, but Joe was even privileged to pass on one of his receipts to an acknowledged *gourmet* : it was the simmering of a ham half the time in stock and vegetables, and the remainder in champagne—or, failing that, in any good white wine ; and as for his salads, he was famed for them.

I can see the pretty little plate of chives and other

chopped herbs, with yoke and white of hard-boiled mashed egg, that our French *bourgeoise* cook would send up ready for his meticulous choice in the mixing of either a Russian or a lettuce salad : “ a niggard of vinegar, a spendthrift of oil, and a maniac at mixing,” was the old adage he went by.

Our cooks were always as proud as I was to try and follow out his ideas, and we were invariably praised for success : I remember an occasion when the confused damsel—partly because she happened to be very pretty—was summoned to the dining-room to receive her meed ; and when it was blame, I caught the brunt of it and mitigated the dose downstairs.

But as it was always in the form of fun I never minded ; I was always proud to be the butt of it. Sometimes I scored, as when the dessert came at that first party, and he said, offering a dish of sweets to his neighbour :

“ Try a preserved fruit ; they’ve stood the move from Bloomsbury wonderfully well,” and I was able to produce the freshly opened box, just arrived from a choice foreign firm, and prove my hospitality to be less stinted.

I had my partisans in those days. Pellegrini, the *Vanity Fair* caricaturist, was one of them. I hailed from his own country, and I can hear him say :

“ Never minder Joe ! You and I we ’ave de sun in de eyes.” And then we would discuss the proper condiment for *maccaroni*, and next time he came he would bring it ready cooked in a fireproof dish, tenderly carried on his lap in the hansom, which he insisted upon placing on the proper spot of the

kitchen stove to warm : on such nights, he ate little of our British fare.

My husband and he were fast friends nevertheless. If Joe had not "de sun in de eyes" he had it in the heart, and Pellegrini adored him, even going so far once as to break his oath never to sleep out of his own lodgings, that he might visit us at a cottage on the Thames, where—although he allowed that the moon "she is a beauty"—he used cold cream and kid gloves to counteract the ill-effects of hard water, and sat up all night rather than retire to a strange bed.

Several tales of this lovable and laughable character are told in *Eminent Victorians*, most of them referring to those happy little homely dinner parties where Joe shone so pleasantly, and which his friends not only graced with their presence, but even sometimes contributed to by little kindly presentations of delicacies.

Perhaps few have received as much kindness as Joe did, and though always grateful, he was never overwhelmed. Of the pride which resents gifts he had none. "I wouldn't take a jot from any but a friend," he would say. "But if a friend, who has more than I, likes to share it with me, why should I refuse? I would do the same for him. I have no money, but I give him what I possess."

And none who knew him—rich or poor—in any of his many spheres, but would testify to this : he gave the young of his wise and tactful advice in their careers, sparing no time or trouble to advance those who were steadfast of purpose ; he gave to his contemporaries of his untiring sympathy—known

only to those who received it ; he gave of his cheerful optimism to all : no form of envy ever crossed his mind.

“ I can enjoy fine things just as well when they belong to others as to me,” he would say. Of none are the words truer : “ Having nothing yet possessing all things.”

But this graver digression has led me far from that merry Christmas party, when the parlourmaid, whose beauty was an attraction of our first home, and whose charm and devotion for eleven years are one of its sweetest memories, was forced to retire to the sideboard to compose her face ; which sort of thing did not only occur at our own table, but at far smarter houses where decorous butlers would bow their heads lower to conceal their smiles, the mistress of one of them even declaring that her maggiordomo had not considered the company that evening worthy of Joe, and had suggested a different choice for a future party.

There was one over-cultured house to which we used to be bidden where the learned hostess was mated to a meek alien, who never presumed to understand her conversation. One evening, before the fish was removed, she leant forward and called down the table to Joe : “ Mr. Comyns Carr, would you kindly inform us ‘ what is style ? ’ ”

Joe scarcely paused before he replied with his sunniest smile, “ Not before the sweets, Madam.” And he turned pleasantly to the amazed host and began complimenting him on the excellence of his claret.

I think, although I am afraid I have heard him

call that host a "Prince of Duldoggery," he preferred him that night to the lady of culture, though she was too serious to be included in his pet aversions, the "Lady Sarah Volatile's" or "jumping-cats" of Society.

But even among such, how prompt he was to detect the tiniest spark of genuine knowledge or enthusiasm, the most foolishly concealed quality of true womanliness and devotion.

I remember a girl-friend of his daughter's, boasting to him in defiance of his counsel, that she would drive to Ascot alone in an admirer's car.

"No you won't," said Joe quietly.

And loudly as she persisted that night—she did *not*.

I could multiply these instances by the score, for even in middle age he was the darling of all girls, though he always told them home-truths, and many was the match he made or wisely marred in the confidential corner of a drawing-room.

Whether in the quiet or the open, of course, he always talked the better for his cigar, and to some the sight of the matches he wasted while seeking the positively apt word was a joy in itself—or an annoyance, as the case might be.

I know one dear friend who could not listen for irritation, and would burst out at last: "Light your pipe, first, old man, do!"

Yet there were times when he had no pipe to light—in smart drawing-rooms or theatre stalls, for instance. He was very naughty in the latter, and kept me in a fever lest, being so well known, some one should overhear him who could make mischief.

Once he was reproved by the management for making his party laugh immoderately in the stage-box at a sorely dull farcical comedy.

"Pray present my compliments to the manager," said Joe suavely to the attendant who had brought the message, "and assure him that we were not laughing at anything on the stage."

The speech he was proud to make every 8th of January in honour of his dear old friend, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's birthday, and the good wishes which for many years he voiced for many friends at Sir George and Lady Lewis' New-Year parties, will not perhaps be altogether forgotten, nor could I recall the topical interests of the moment after so long.

But those who knew him best knew that the opportunities for witty rejoinder and humorous invention were by no means limited to set occasions; they were instantly seized on provocation which no one else would have perceived, and as often in the simplicity of domestic life as in the society of clever people who might have been supposed to inspire him.

Who but Joe, when a picnic was spread beneath the trees in the woods at Walton, and a combative young curate, claiming to have secured the spot, swooped down upon us with his Sunday-school flock, would have whispered merrily: "Never mind! We'll cut him according to his cloth!"

Or who, on being asked by a lady which was my "At Home" day, would have replied: "Let me see! Sunday is the Lord's Day, and Monday is my wife's day;" or, in the days of my slenderness

and his more opulent figure, would have declared that, taking the average, we were the thinnest couple in London ?

These trivial jokes will seem poor to the friends who have heard his later and more brilliant *bon-mots* and have listened to his longer orations ; but, as I have said, I know little of those public speeches. The most notable of these at which I remember being present was at a dinner of the Royal Literary Fund, when he spoke long and with deep illumination on his beloved Charles Dickens ; he always spoke at the various commemorative entertainments given in the great novelist's honour, but never so brilliantly and so profoundly as that time.

When the occasion was more formal—as when he took the chair at the Actors' Benevolent or the Dramatic and Musical Fund—he would sometimes recite to me beforehand part of the speech which he intended to deliver, but I believe he rarely stuck to his plan, and I have heard him say that he preferred merely to prepare the “ joints ” of his subject—*i.e.* each new departure—and to leave all the filling-in to the inspiration of the moment as influenced by the foregoing speaker or any unforeseen incident.

I recollect that the peroration of a speech for the Dramatic and Musical Fund ended : “ I plead not so much for the deserving as for the undeserving,” and I believe that he added : “ of whom I am one.”

I know that he told me next day—half in glee, but much also in pride—that the Toastmaster had told him that he had never stood behind a chair and seen so much money raked in.

It was certainly to his mastery of the impromptu

that he owed the triumph of his oration before the U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Bayard, at a moment when war seemed suddenly possible with our great English-speaking neighbour ; and I recollect that Ellen Terry, who was then in New York, told me later that when Joe's speech appeared in the papers *en résumé* (it never could be wholly reported owing to his making no notes) there was a marked change in the tide of feeling.

He has related a part of this incident in his *Eminent Victorians*, but he has not mentioned this last particular, neither has he told how his triumph was won by his large appreciation of the love lavished upon the giants of our English literature by our "friends across the seas."

CHAPTER X

HOLIDAYS

A HAPPY chapter this : for though Joe always had so many irons in the fire that lengthy holidays were not only very few with him but actually avoided and disliked, he made merry so well by the wayside that many a memory falls into a category scarcely enshrined in a longer period than a summer afternoon, or at most, a week-end trip ; he made holiday for other folk all the time, and in so doing made it for himself.

Of week-end visits none were more joyous than those spent under the hospitable roof of our friends Sir George and Lady Lewis at Walton-on-Thames, where Sir Edward Burne-Jones was a constant visitor. Neither of those friends were knighted or baroneted then, so that perhaps we might all have been said to be—using Joe's own words—"of the lower middle class, to which I am proud to belong."

Oscar Wilde was often of the Walton party—fresh from Oxford then, and considerably esteemed as a wit himself, though not, as Joe shows in his *Reminiscences*, always above the suspicion of borrowing.

In this respect he somewhat resembled Whistler ; but the latter was more honest in his plagiarism.

One day Whistler accused Joe of making a joke at the expense of his friend—a false accusation in reality, though sometimes lightly true—to which Joe quickly answered : “ Well, I can make a friend most days, but I can only make a good joke now and then : ” assuredly only half a truth, too.

“ Ha ! ha ! ” laughed Whistler with his shrill cackle, “ I wish I had said that myself ! ”

“ Never mind, Jimmy, you will,” retorted Joe.

And the cackle broke forth again whole-heartedly, whereas Wilde might possibly have been offended.

But very few folk were ever offended at my husband’s fun.

One of the members said to him one day at the Garrick Club, in a whimsical and deprecating manner : “ These fellows tell me that I have the reputation of a wit, my dear Carr.” To which Joe replied : “ Don’t worry ! you’ll live that down in an afternoon.” And I am told that the friend was wont to repeat this against himself. Again, the mother of a pretty young girl, whom he was openly flattering, asked him, laughing, whether his intentions were serious, to which he replied : “ Serious, but not honourable, madam.” But if this lady was not offended perhaps it was because he had known her since the time when she was fourteen years old herself.

An evening in Lady Lewis’ pretty drawing-room at the Walton cottage comes vividly back to me. We were playing some geographical game with the children, in the course of which Oscar Wilde—with

a view to grown-up applause—found occasion to ask : “ Where is the capital of the Rothschilds ? ”

The children looked blank.

“ Why, in Behring Straits,” said Joe promptly, and I remember old Sir George Lewis’ smile, for it was at the time of the famous city crisis when, but for that capital, the great firm of Baring might have stopped payment.

Even in that most precarious form of fun, the practical joke, Joe was never known to hurt even the most thin-skinned.

One day he and Mr. Hallé, his co-director at the New Gallery—made an excursion to Sir Edward Burne-Jones’ home—The Grange, Kensington—and sent up a message to the artist asking if he would receive two gentlemen who had called to ask whether he would take shares in the *Great Wheel*. The maid must have been sore put to it to keep her countenance, for the rage with which the painter viewed the monstrosity that climbed the sky above his garden wall was well known in his household.

He rushed downstairs, palette in hand, only to find “ little Carr,” as he affectionately called him, waiting demurely in the hall on quite other business.

At the sweet Rottingdean home a similar joke was played : Burne-Jones’ loathing of the “ interviewer ” was a very open secret ; so one summer evening Joe crept up to the front door and sent in an audacious name, purporting to be that of an American who hoped for a few words with the distinguished artist.

From the shade of the porch he peeped into the dining-room window, and had the satisfaction of

seeing his friend creep under the dinner-table, while the maid returned with the message that Sir Edward Burne-Jones was not at home. I think Joe's familiar back was quickly recognised as he walked, in mock dignity, down the garden path, and he was not sent empty away.

Of course, the practical jokes of which he shared the invention with his good friend J. L. Toole—a master of the craft—were the most cunningly devised. He has related the choicest in *Eminent Victorians*, but I could tell of many a family laugh over them, and “One more Tooler, father, before we go to bed,” was a common request.

One of the favourite stories was told of him when travelling down with Joe to the beautiful old moated house at Ightham, which our American friends, General and Mrs. Palmer, had made their English home. Stopping at a wayside station above which a lordly mansion stood among the trees, Toole beckoned a porter and, in the gibberish that he used so glibly at these moments, pretended to utter the name of its owner.

“Oh, you mean Mr. So-and-So,” said the porter.

“Of course—I said so!” retorted the shameless comedian. “Well, here's half a crown. When the train's off, run up to the house and say ‘we shall be seven to dinner and the game will follow.’”

The whistle went as the porter, holding on to the door, enquired: “Who shall I say, Sir?”

But the train moved on and Toole returned to the reading of his paper, leaving a gaping man on the platform.

This same Ightham Mote was the scene of many of our happiest hours. Its charming hostess was a dear friend whose rare gifts of sympathy and true hospitality enabled her not only to attract to her house the brightest of spirits, but also to draw from them their best. Children, too, to whom she was a fairy godmother, were welcome as friends in their own right. Our daughter and younger son were specially dear to her in their different ways, and many was the grave, childish saying of the latter that she would repeat to the proud father, though perhaps the one he oftenest told himself was said to Alma Tadema when the five-year-old boy remarked that he preferred a gas to a coal fire, because the first went out when *you* liked, and the latter when *it* liked.

Joe was appreciated of all children and always won their favour easily ; but I remember one little lady administering a severe rebuff to him when, after many lures, he said at last : “ Well, I don’t care whether you come or not ! ” to which she replied : “ Oh, yes, you do ! ”

But that was an exception ; they were usually his slaves, and loved his stories as much as their elders did. He treated them as his equals only requiring that they should do the same ; and when his first grandson was born and some one alluded to him as a proud grandfather, he said : “ I like the child, but there’s to be no grandfather about it. I’m to be Joe to him as to others.” And so he was to the children of that dear lady in beautiful Ightham Mote.

Christmas was a real Yuletide in the fine old wainscoted hall and library, where Joe was always

ready for the revel, as he was for the outdoor sports with his own children and those of the house. There were games in the beautiful old quadrangle and fishing feats from the bridges that lead across the moat to the bowling-green beyond ; but the latter must have been worse than a bad joke to an expert angler such as my husband—consisting as they did in trying to lure the trout by a bait tied on to a hairpin ; luckily the fish swam away merrily and perhaps enjoyed the fun too.

Frederick Jameson, that earliest friend of the days of our courtship, led the carol and song, and played for children and grown-ups to dance ; Henry James sat in the ingle nook and told us ghost-stories of his making wholly in keeping with the place ; George Meredith watched and made shrewd comments on the characteristics and possible careers of our various children, and discoursed on every topic—always expecting the homage due to him and reserving the conversation, even from Joe, by a long-drawn “ Ah—” until he was ready with his next paradox.

Yet there was a moment when Joe scored even off Meredith. I think he tells the tale in *Coasting Bohemia*, but not of himself. Meredith had been criticizing George Eliot, and in a brief pause, Joe put in : “ Yes ! Panoplied in all the philosophies she swoops upon the commonplace.” And Meredith, laughing, replied, “ I wish I had said that myself ! ”

One day we were busy amusing the children in the big Hall with a game of Definitions ; one wrote down a word for Subject, the next man defined, and

the third—the paper being turned over the Subject—“recovered” it.

Thus : Subject, *Soap* ; Definition, as made by Joe : *The Horror of the East-end multitude*. Recovery, *Jack the Ripper* : the nickname of the celebrated East-end murderer who was then the talk of the whole town.

Joe was leaving that day for London, and the man came to announce that the trap was at the door.

He rose to go, but the children had begun another definition for his “last.” *Woman* was given as the word. *The Better Half*, wrote the next person.

“Only just time to make the train, Sir,” said the footman.

The children wailed, and we all followed him out of the hall and saw him off ; but half an hour later a telegram was handed to our hostess.

“Recovery : *An Angel once removed*” ; and nobody needed to hear the signature.

The children were always the frame to the picture in that lovable household, and our daughter—the apple of her father’s eye, made in his mould, gifted with his humour and large with his urbane and generous heart—had a very special place there. I remember his pride when George Meredith watching her one day at his feet, said : “Look at the bumps on that child’s head. Always let her pursue whatever walk in life she chooses.”

His advice was followed ; and she *knew* what she would choose. I was having her trained for a violinist (for her gifts were several) and her master

was proud of her at twelve years old. But at fourteen she came to us one day and said : " Father, I hope you won't mind : I've sold my violin. I know now that I want to draw—and no one can serve two masters so I've put away the temptation."

Joe was generally the centre around the children mustered in those good days, and many an extra ten minutes did he beg off their bedtime in the summer twilight or by the big Christmas logs. He used to tell them that he hated going to bed himself, and nothing was more true.

" If I didn't know that your mother always gives me cotton sheets," he would say on a winter's night, " I would never go. I've no fancy for a country trip every time I turn round in bed."

But indeed he needed no such excuse for sitting up late when he had a congenial audience. He had a wonderful capacity for sound sleep when the time came—a capacity equalled, as he expressed it, for " enjoying " laziness ; because, of exercise—save in the pursuit of bird or fish—he would have none ; but most of his life he sat up late and his most welcome form of rest was always in talk.

In this relaxation he was even more than matched in argumentativeness by the husband of another most hospitable hostess, to whom he addresses the following letter after a long visit when she had housed us in a homeless interval. I may add that our host was an etymologist, and would confront Joe with a dictionary in support of his own view of a disputed word ; also that he was an eminent amateur musician and a vehement Wagnerian.

“MY DEAR ——,

It seems to me that you and your husband ought to be told that you are excellent hosts—and yet I don't want the thing to get about. At first I thought that I would declare loudly to all whom I met how pleasant a thing it was to stay in your house ; and then I thought I wouldn't.

When one has discovered a really charming place where one can live with exclusive regard to one's own selfish indulgence, it is perhaps hardly wise to noise it abroad. Some of the snuggest corners in Europe have been ruined by such imprudent chatter ; and I feel that I should never forgive myself if I were to be the means of making it generally known that your house is so delightful. But I think after all that I can trust you !

You are not the sort of person to gossip about such a thing ; and when I tell you that what I am going to say is confidential, I simply mean that I would not, for the present at any rate, mention the subject to your daughter ; young people are fanciful, and she might misinterpret my meaning—besides why shouldn't she find it out for herself ? No, let this be for you and your husband's ear alone ! And even for you it must be in some sense a barren secret ; you cannot stay with yourselves ! If you could I should recommend nothing so strongly as a few weeks' visit to your charming home. It would do your husband all the good in the world—get him out of himself, so to speak—while it would make you a different woman. Not that I think that in any way desirable ; I simply avail myself of a phrase

that is always applied to me when a change is recommended.

Yes ! If you could only stay at —— !

The family is small, but extremely intelligent, with minds well stored with the most varied kinds of knowledge.

Your host is a type !

Waking—with him—appears to be the momentary interruption of an animated conversation which has engaged the long hours others reserve for sleep.

With them a new day seems to open a new volume with cover, title page and preface. Not so with him.

The intervening night is simply a semi-colon in an uncompleted sentence—a Wagnerian clause in a melody that repudiates a close. This might seem to argue a too rigid adherence to a single theme with menace of monotony. Yet nothing could be less true.

At the bidding of a single word the whole scene changes with the shifting magic of a dream, and you are surprised to find yourself suddenly plunged into quite another conversational sea.

I have seen visitors at your house who would turn a deaf ear to these alert exercises of the dawn—moody men who became at once absorbed in the mere pleasures of the table ; taking refuge in bacon from arguments to which they could find no auroral reply. They are cowards and I will have none of them ! Rather would I emulate the tact of your hostess who finds, and welcomes, in these wide-ranging thoughts of morn, a bulwark that keeps the host from the kitchen boiler. For he is very apt to descend suddenly from his philosophic heights and

pounce with unerring precision on some petty domestic error.

It is here you may observe the sweet influence of the daughter of the house, whose finesse would almost deserve the name of cunning if its purpose were not so benign.

In her skilful hands I have seen disaster averted by a dictionary and an impending storm transferred from a tea-cup to a disputed line of Tennyson.

I am painting for you only the lighter moods of life at this charming house ; of what else is delightful you must some day go and see for yourself. But I forget ; of course you can't and there is my difficulty staring me in the face. I wonder if it is mine alone ?

I find it so easy to trace a smile to its source : so difficult to define the lasting charm that lies behind it !

And even when the definition is at hand my tongue halts at eulogy. Odd ! I love to be praised and remembrance offers no instance when I have been in fear lest appreciation should sink to flattery. But when I try to praise others—even as they deserve—I am overtaken by a feeling of delicacy on their behalf which I have never felt for myself. And so I end dumb on the very threshold of my theme.

I should like to say a great number of things of you and your husband, but somehow it doesn't seem possible. Some day, when I meet a stranger in the train at one of those odd moments when by some irresistible impulse, I am driven to confide to a chance acquaintance secrets that through a long life I have hidden from my dearest friends—I

shall say something about you and him that you might like to hear. But I can't command the hour and meanwhile, you see, I am no further than when I began. All I can say is that, if ever you ask me to your house again, let nothing be changed from what it was, for it could not be changed for the better.

Yours ever truly,

J. W. COMYNS CARR."

After this epistle it may not be thought partial on my part to state that, from the days of our youthful visits to Balcarres to the end of his life, my husband was a welcome guest at country houses ; the following, in reply to a request from Mrs. F. D. Millet of Broadway, that he should relieve the strain of a spell of female society upon her husband, seems to show this.

"MY DEAR MRS. MILLET,

I ought not, but I will ! And lest I should falter in my bad resolution, I have already wired to you saying I should be down on Saturday.

It is a strange thing about duty. I believe there is no one who sees what is facetiously called "the path of duty" more clearly than I do ; but we are differently gifted, and I fancy I never was intended to walk in it. Like the criminal who acquires in the end an extensive knowledge of law by industriously incurring its penalties, I believe that if I could recall all the moral maxims I have neglected in practice, I might serve as a veritable storehouse of wisdom and good conduct. And so

it happens that, though I see clearly I ought to stay in town and work, I am nevertheless determined to accept your kind invitation and come to you on Saturday next. Tell Frank to defer suicide till after that date.

I can indeed well understand his melancholy. No man can dwell long in the exclusive society of women without being crushed by the sense of his own unworthiness. We are not fit for it. I often wish there were some bad women in the world, with whom we might associate in our baser moments, and sometimes, in a dreary mood, I am apt to wonder what women can have been like before the Fall, they are so perfect now.

Perhaps in another world we shall be better and you will be worse ; let us hope for the best.

And in the meantime let not Frank despair. When I see him on Saturday I will do my best to detach his nose from the grindstone and tune his unaccustomed lips to words that were once familiar to us both.

Yours ever truly,

J. W. COMYNS CARR."

In those earlier days he sometimes pretended that his wardrobe was unfitted for such places, but I think even this was but a shallow piece of mock modesty on his part, for he was well aware that he could shine if he liked in any environment.

A letter to my sister, which I have just found, may illustrate this :

19, BLANDFORD SQUARE,
N.W.

“MY DEAR ALMA,

Many thanks for the brushes. When my hair is gone—“which will be short,” as Pellegrini says—I can use them for sweeping a crossing. In the meantime they make a most excellent parting. Seriously they are beautiful.

I have never before had brushes in a case—it seems to lift one’s social status. Hitherto my brushes have lain in my portmanteau cheek by jowl with my boots, or have mingled their tears with my sponge.

Now all is changed; I feel I could stay at a country house and meet the footman on equal terms. Of course, I don’t mean that seriously—no man could hope to be the equal of a footman. I am a democrat but no revolutionist, and I have always felt that so long as liveried servants keep their supremacy the throne is safe. Compared with this the land question is a trifle. “Dieu et mon drawers” is the loyal but terrified sentiment with which I always awake on a visit, and see the footman turning my tattered underclothing inside out. But now my brushes will save me.

Yours,

JOE.”

In the later years of his life, as his friends multiplied far and wide and his social gifts became famous, he was pressed into circles unknown to me, and our country-house visits together became fewer; so

that personally I remember his talk oftener at some seaside place where we had run down for a week-end, or on the verandah of some foreign hotel where he would be immediately surrounded by a delighted audience—in later years not by any means always composed of his own countrymen. Though his associations with French artists and men of letters over pictures for the New Gallery—and, more still, over his English editorship of *L'Art*—had taught him enough of their tongue for his business, he was not a finished French scholar; but he was never afraid to make a shot at expressing his thought, and consequently he improved enormously at the end of his life. I remember the astonished comment of two Armenian lads and a charming Finnish lady whom we met at a Swiss mountain resort: “*Mais c'est épatant! De faire des calembours comme cela dans une langue étrangère.*”

He only needed an audience; and he had it every hour of the day in those two Armenian boys, who would stand for hours watching him throw his line over the lake and coax the fish out—just, they used to say, as he would coax the children to him in the roads or the visitors in the lounge—“*sans se donner de la peine.*”

I am not sure of the justice of that last remark. Perhaps he never purposely gave himself trouble, but he amused others because his love of his own kind was such that he must always needs be in touch with them, be they peasant or peer, and at the end of his life he preferred to lounge in the road and chat with the convalescent soldiers in a quiet village than to sit comfortably in the seclusion of a lovely garden.

It was because he was always alive that he was not dull ; but I must admit he needed plenty of human interest to keep him so.

And I think, for this reason, that the life of a good hotel, preferably a foreign one, afforded him the best opportunities for fun ; he knew just how much or how little the applause of such kaleidoscopic society was worth ; but it tickled his appetite for the moment and was the required sauce to his holiday rest.

The following letters to his daughter variously illustrate this aspect of him :

EDEN HOTEL,
MONTE CARLO.

“ MY DEAR DOLL,

Our little hotel at Monte Carlo is a cosy place, containing among its visitors some odd and rather lonely females, both English and American. I overheard a conversation the other night between four of them—two English and two Americans—at which your mother would like to have assisted. They evidently did not know that we were English, and let themselves go on the subject of the male sex. The leader of the band, an American lady, whose hips described a circle about as big as the Round Pond in Kensington Gardens, was especially vehement in denouncing us, though I can hardly conceive she had ever received any other cause of resentment than neglect. To an English lady, who could not compete with her in size but fairly distanced her in ugliness, she held forth at great length on the superior advantages which women enjoyed in

America. "Over there," she said, "we've just got men like *that*," and she placed an enormous thumb on a morsel of unresisting bread to indicate where men were. "If they do anything we don't like, why, Madam, they hear from us pretty quick. And that's where they ought to be," she added, "for they are just nothing but savages!" At which the gruesome English woman said that that was what she had always held to; but that, in England, she never could find any woman with the courage to say so. Then the fat American gave her country away.

"But see now," she said, "we've still got to fight the law even in our country. I said to an American man, 'do you love your wife?' 'Why, of course,' he said. 'Do you love your mother?' I said. 'Just don't I,' he replied. 'Do you love your sister?' 'Why sure,' he said. 'Well then,' I said to him, 'Do you know the American constitution declares that every living citizen should have a vote except children, criminals *and women*.'" And then she turned to the English woman and added: "Do you know, Madam, the thought of that American law just makes me blush all over when I go to bed at night."

I confess as I looked at her, I couldn't think of the unrighteous law, for my mind was filled with the idea of what a wild and billowy tract of country that blush would have to traverse. Fancy the Round Pond turned into the Red Sea with a single blush.

Yours,

J. COMYNS CARR."

BELLAGIO,

“ MY DEAREST DOLL,

May, 1903.

We are in the midst of a thunderstorm that is tearing and raging round the mountains ; for the moment it is like Mr. Chamberlain in the earlier part of his campaign—very loud and very near, but I think it is taking itself off to the Gotthard.

I don't think I have told you of the two little bits of American character I encountered at my hotel. One evening three ladies of that country were set beside me at table d'hôte. They were not prepossessing or young, but I noticed with just a momentary flush of flattery that there was an obvious struggle going on as to which of them should occupy the chair next to me ; the struggle ended, and then the next but one turned to the victor and said, ‘ Couldn't you see, my dear, that I just wanted to protect you in case you might be addressed in a manner that might offend you.’ Poor dears ! they didn't know that God had protected them against any attack of mine.

Later, two rather nice girls and their mother took the same places ; and one evening after dinner, when the terrace was full of people, the mother looked up to where one of the girls was standing at the window of the room above, and called out : ‘ Don't let him kiss you, dear.’ We all turned to look up, and there stood the girl with a parrot on her shoulder. There was naturally an audible smile among the spectators, and the girl herself was in fits of laughter.

Best love from your father,

J. COMYNS CARR.”

BORDIGHERA,
April 1909.

“MY DEAR DOLLY,

We are very comfortable in our little hotel here, with two nice Italian brothers to cater for us. The Italian village children please me mightily, and I hobble about in their language with just enough understanding to enable me to amuse myself.

We are an odd society: nearly all women, American and English. They are mostly nice people in their way, but not exciting, and of the place generally it may be said that whatever other attractions it may possess it does not seem to be a health resort for beauty. The air apparently is not recommended for pretty people. In the streets and on the hills the German is more or less in evidence, and sometimes as I pass them by I am inclined to side with Balfour and to demand that four more Dreadnoughts should be laid down at once. Their admiration of nature somehow always makes me feel shy, and I can almost see the landscape making an ugly face after their loudly proclaimed *Wunderschön*. However, they really don't trouble us much — the neighbourhood is so genuinely beautiful.

Yours,

J. COMYNS CARR.”

He often touched on the beauties of nature as related to art when writing to his artist daughter, and I find this keen little bit of criticism in a letter to her from Bellagio.

“This place is beautiful, and makes one wonder

little that the Italians thought of landscape as a thing of design before the Northerners found a new beauty in the empire of cloud and sky. Certainly these mountains have great enchantment of form, and the Southern light defines every detail."

And this longer letter of varying interest also rings the same note.

FROM WENGEN,
BERNESE OBERLAND.

"MY DEAR DOLL,

Here is a line from me whom I daresay you thought hopeless in that matter. But such a little thing will sometimes provoke a sinner to virtue. Two strangely fashioned men share the room adjoining mine, divided from me only by a washed deal partition held together by French nails. They spend the day in moody silence and in grey frock coats which if they were well cut would suit the Cup Day at Ascot. But they return at nine and chatter unceasingly till 10.30. It is now only ten and it has occurred to me that instead of tossing about on the sea of their incoherent conversations I would write a line to you.

This is a beautiful place which I should admire even more if nobody else admired it. But it is made too fair to go scot free of praise, and so I must fain clap my hands with the rest. You see we are exclusive in our emotions as the society of a country town and do not wish to share them with our inferiors. That is a part of it, but I think my reluctance to hear nature applauded has a better reason too, though it is hard to give it words. I

know I always feel a better right to enjoy its beauty when I am otherwise engaged, in killing a bird perhaps, in fishing a stream or I suppose best of all in some sort of labour that the needs of the world demand.

I went for an early walk the other day up to the Wengern Alp ; all the mountain in shadow and the pines blacker than their own fallen image on the grass. I was alone and met no one on the path but the lads laden with their washed deal milk-pails as they came singing from every green hill. And as they passed I felt sort of shamefaced. I was out for beauty, a kind of dilettante wandering in search of impressions, and I knew deep down in me that they must one day and another have won impressions I could never gain. No one can be really intimate with a strange land, can ever really read the face of a hillside as it is read by those however simple who were born to see it coloured by the changing fortunes of their life from childhood to manhood. Nature is so shy, so reluctant to speak if she thinks she is overheard, but she will sing to herself when she thinks we are busy.

For us who are not artists I think beauty is only really captured in that way. It is trapped unawares, stolen in the silences of night or dawn, or burnt into the brain by the fire of some passionate moment to which it remains as an unforgotten background. Of course the artist, the poet or the painter, has other rights and other penalties. 'He that would save his life must lose it,' and the artist is always giving up for himself what he re-fashions for the joy of others. He is like the cuckoo that sojourns

in every nest and is itself but a homeless voice. Even the beauty that he pursues is never really possessed; it flutters for a moment in his hand and then takes wing for others to inherit. It is bought so dearly and then sold for a mere song.

But this is a digression. We were talking of Switzerland, and I do believe this is one of the choicest spots in it, but of course we don't discuss its merits all day. On the contrary, I think we talk most of the food, comparing the veal of yesterday with the mutton of to-day, wondering from what strange waters, remote or near, come those strange fish that masquerade under the titles of the dwellers in Northern seas. And then we pry into the lives of other lodgers, making up imaginary relationships among families that are as normally related as our own—taking a curious interest in characters in which we have really no concern, and exchanging cards warmly with parting guests, knowing that we shall see their faces again no more. And all the while the air is so good, when the weather is not so bad, that we feel well, which is a long way on the road to feeling happy, and we are sometimes pointed at as distinguished, and then vanity covers the rest of the road and we are very jolly.

Yours ever,

FATHER."

His preference for a foreign holiday—unless one in his own country, could be allied to fishing or shooting—did not, as will be understood from stray remarks in his correspondence, extend to Germany. He always disliked the race, and I can

recollect a journey in our young days during which we had made a halt at Munich with Beatty Kingston. I am afraid Joe's description of the place and the people included such scathing epithets as "The Burial-place of the Peto-Baptists" and "The Suburb of the World." For his excuse I must note that it was the bad season for the Opera, although we did once hear "The Flying Dutchman," which he particularly admired ; also that the old Pinacotek, with its riches in Paintings by Old Masters, was closed, as if to spite him ; naturally he could not be consoled by "the collection of middle-aged articles" offered him as a salve—declaring that he saw plenty of these in the streets of the town.

He was always just as hard on the German "frau" as on her husband, and his description of them on the mountain paths at Gastein, with skirts looped up like window blinds and waterproofs strapped across their shoulders in case of a storm, could only be equalled by the whimsical words he had for the red necks of the men bulging over their collars.

He was not a Central Europe man ; the French or the Italians were always first with him after his own people. *Romance* for him lay in the North ; I have often heard him insist that those most deeply possess it who dwell in the mist and dream of the sun, and he would cite "The Wizard of the North" and the Scottish Land in proof of his theory : yet the South stood for gaiety with him, and he sighed for the sun even as I did who had been bred in it.

It is curious that Rome he only saw for the first

time late in life, upon being chosen to write the introduction to the British Section of the International Exhibition there, and afterwards appointed England's representative on the Art Congress.

I shall quote a private appreciation of the written part of his work from that acute and sympathetic critic, Edward Russell of the *Liverpool Post*.

NAPLES,
April 28th, 1911.

“DEAR COMYNS CARR,

I cannot refrain from congratulating you on your Introduction to the Roman Catalogue of British Paintings, etc. Not only its literary felicity, but its fine and illuminating judgment; the choiceness of the language; and the apt biographical illustrations; the humane diplomacy of occasional gentle, but searching suggestions of censure; the insight of the aperçus; and the contribution of several original maxims to the sterling floating currency of criticism, make it one of the most memorable of such pieces.

Yours,

EDWARD RUSSELL.”

But Rome as a city he loved not, as he loved the Tuscan and Umbrian towns; its vast antiquities oppressed him, its medieval structures he disliked, and the race that had left its impress there bored him; even in the natural surroundings he found too much melancholy—definitely contrasted in his mind with that Northern sternness which breeds Romance; but he shall speak for himself.

“The archeological side of Rome I can only gape at as a tourist : I have no learning that way : though, of course, there are scenes of the old world which touch the imagination without the kind of knowledge that must, to those who possess it, make the place deeply interesting. The more modern Rome—the Rome of the Renaissance, scarcely makes a single appeal and creates no such satisfying atmosphere as Florence. The Sistine I must see again ; the light was bad to-day and the effect at so great a height did not immediately leave the tremendous impression of Michael Angelo’s power that comes of the more intimate knowledge given by our photographs. The colour, however, yielded more than I had expected. Tell Fred if he is by you that I am wholly at one with him about the Stanze of Raphael. They gain in site, and although I knew the compositions well, I found them better than I knew with a charm of colour unexpected and superior to any of his easel pictures, except perhaps the Madonna at Dresden ; truly a marvellous genius, using all the resources of style with the freedom and ease of a painter of genre—and here, which is not always so in his later work, absolutely free from rhetoric in gesture : I must go back to them again.

“In the general style of Roman Renaissance building I have no delight—and never thought to have ; but, of course, there are separate things to discover that I have as yet not had time to see. But St. Angelo makes a great barbaric pile that is mightily impressive. St. Peter’s seems to me much less noble in general effect than St. Paul’s, and its interior ornament, painting and sculpture, seemed,

on a swift view, to be a wilderness of that kind of art I don't love—all except Michael Angelo's *Pietà*, which stood out in modest simplicity and intensity amid the garish surroundings.

Yours,

JOE."

" DEAREST,

I lunched with Barrère again to-day, and afterwards we went in his motor to the lakes of Nemi and Albano. It was a very interesting drive, and the lakes are really beautiful, though in a grave and sombre way. Of course it was not bright sunlight, but in any case the landscape here has a peculiar character. It has an ancient and desert look, hardly joyous and not very fruitful, different entirely in this respect from the landscape around Florence. But it has character, and what one may call style: and the remains of ruined buildings, aqueduct or tomb, which cut the sky at every turn, seem to belong to these surroundings. The landscape is of their date, seems almost to have remained of their date, and not to have found the renewed youth which mocks antiquity in other kinds of scenery. A certain gravity is the prevailing sentiment—impressive but touched with sadness.

I am seeing isolated bits of Rome little by little. If I were settled here for long I think the sculpture would attract me as a study—but like everything else in the way of art in Rome one has to be constantly sifting and sorting the good from the bad. Here as elsewhere there is a mass of indifferent achievement, a mass of work either poorly copied

from the Greek or poorly conceived and lacking vitality. One feels more and more that the Romans were not artists—great collectors I have no doubt, and perhaps connoisseurs—but without the finest fire of the spirit. There are a few great things here that are superb, and others doubtless which I haven't seen, but in many instances of even admired things there is not the saving quality of life that makes Phidias seem modern as well as great.

Yours,

JOE."

Touching this last criticism he made us laugh when he got home by saying that he longed to cry to the crowds who patiently paced the Vatican galleries, guide-book in hand: "Go out into the sunshine, dear people, and enjoy your lunch—this is all bosh."

It was delightful to me the other day to find a perfect echo of these sentiments in the letters of the late Mr. Stopford Brooke to his daughters. But it is not the only instance in those enthralling volumes where I noted a remarkable likeness in many of the views, and even in the method of expressing them, of these two brilliant Irishmen.

CHAPTER XI

FISHING HOLIDAYS

I HAD not known my husband six months before I knew him for an enthusiastic fisherman. He tells in his *Reminiscences* of the first teaching he had from a reprobate old peasant in the Lake Country, and the passion for it never left him ; the happiest of his summer days were spent in the pursuit of it and, from the time when I—set to watch a float while he threw a line further down the stream—allowed the fish to escape, to an evening towards the close of his life when I helped his unsteady steps to the bank of the Windrush at Burford, his characteristic grey felt hat stuck full of flies and the graceful gesture with which his long line was flung back and forward and then laid softly on the water of some quiet stream, are among the things which I often recall.

I can see him now, on that first holiday, stumbling with his swaying rod down the rocky bed of the Dove with the sunset behind him, while I sat waiting on a grassy bank eager to know what sport he had had as soon as he was within earshot. He was a most expert angler ; and that was the beginning of

many happy fishing trips—in Derbyshire and Westmoreland, on the Tweed at Peebles and the lochs and rivers of Perthshire, Argyllshire and Sutherland ; but most notably on the stretch of a Hertfordshire stream which he rented for some years with other friends, and where he could best exercise his skill with the dry fly.

A tiny cottage, just big enough for three men or for me and the children, stood on the edge of the water, which was crossed by a plank bridge. Sometimes, when there was no one else, I would be allowed—most alarming of experiences !—to use the landing net, and I think any of his angling comrades—A. E. W. Mason, Seymour Hicks, Sam Sothorn and others—would sympathise with my terror over the responsibility.

I think there were no happier days in my husband's life than those spent in that Hertfordshire cot, and there is no frame into which his figure fits more familiarly than the sedgy bank of that sunlit river, hemmed by boldly contrasting forget-me-not and marshmallow, with the May-fly flitting over the sparkling ripples and the shaded pools.

And nothing so helped his periods of creative work as this rural recreation.

It was on the shores of Loch Rannoch that he wrote the first Acts of his *King Arthur* for Henry Irving, and on the banks of the Lea that he saw the barge bearing the body of the Fair Elaine. The Black Mount at the foot of the loch may have stood for the rugged rocks around Camelot, and the limpid stream dividing emerald meadows at eventide, for the river that circled Arthur's Halls.

He was wont whimsically to declare that the "gaslights of Piccadilly" were more satisfying to him than a country life unless enhanced by the pleasure of sport; but no one saw the beauties of Nature in the intervals of sport more sympathetically than he did, as he tells for himself in *Coasting Bohemia* :

"I sometimes think," he writes, "that those who haunt the country, without conscious sense of its many beauties, are apt to learn and love its beauties best. How often the memory of a day's shooting is indissolubly linked with the pattern of a fading autumn sky, when we have stood at the edge of a stubble field wondering whether the growing twilight will suffice for the last drive. And if this is true of other forms of sport, it is everlastingly true of fishing. There is hardly a remembered day on a Scotch loch, or beside a southern stream, which has not stamped upon it some unfading image of landscape beauty. It was not for that we set forth in the morning, for then the changing lights in a dappled sky counted for no more than a promise of good sport; during those earlier hours there is no feeling but a feeling of impatience to be at work; and the splash of a rising trout, before the rod is joined and ready and the line run through its rings, is heard with a sense of half-resentment lest we should have missed the favourable moment of the day. But as the hours pass, the mind becomes more tranquilly attuned to its surroundings. The keenness of the pursuit is still there, but little by little the still spirit of the scene invades our thoughts,

and as we tramp home at nightfall the landscape that was unregarded when we set forth upon our adventure now seems to wrap itself like a cloak around us with a spell that it is impossible to resist. A hundred such visions, born of an angler's wanderings, come back to me across the space of many years. I can see the reeds etched against a sunset sky, as they spring out of a little loch in the hills above the inn at Tummel. And then, with a changing flash of memory, the broad waters of Rannoch are outspread, fringed by its purple hills. And then, again, in a homelier frame, I can see the willows that border the Lea, their yellow leaves turned to gold under the level rays of the evening sun; and I can hear the nightingale in the first notes of its song as I cross the plank bridge that leads me homeward to the cottage by the stream."

By which it will also be seen that his "love of laziness" did not hinder him in the pursuit of sport.

Exercise for its own sake he resolutely refused to take, and when my Alpine-enthusiast father dragged him up a Piz—the last bit with his eyes shut—he said: "I shall never climb anything again!"

But Seymour Hicks could tell a different tale of a memorable evening on which he hooked a big trout in the dusk—Joe teasing him as to its poor weight—and when they stayed so late beside a Scottish tarn to land it that their friends below came up the mountain with lanterns to the rescue.

In Peeblesshire, too, he had gay hours with a Captain Fearon, known to our children as *Plum-bun*, because of a rhyme with which he teased them.

This fine old sportsman—though he must have been sixty at the time—walked twenty miles after a day's sport so as to let Joe have the only spare seat on a buggy that he might catch the night express to town for work on the morrow. I can see the tall handsome old man now on the moor-side, gaily waving adieu to Joe with a champagne bottle which he had seized from the picnic basket to cheer him on the road.

Joe had many days with him on the Tweed; one of them, following such a big spate that an old countryman wading in front of them was never seen more after they had warned him against imprudently breasting the swirl of the water where the river made an abrupt bend ahead.

The gloom of this incident was partly mitigated by their being told that the man was a drunkard whose fate had often been so prophesied to him; but they fished no more in a spate on the Tweed.

Fun was oftener their portion. I fancy it was to Fearon that Joe made the *bon-mot* current in the Garrick Club, where he represented himself as lunching with Noah on the Ark.

"You must have good spate fishing here, Mr. Noah," he reports himself as saying while they sat smoking on the balcony overlooking the Flood.

"It *would* be good," replied the host, "but unluckily, you see, I have only two worms."

He writes himself of his fishing on Loch Awe; and later, on Loch Etive, as the guest of our charming friend Alec Stevenson, whose cheery voice would ask of his keeper after breakfast: "Is it fishin' or shutin' the day, Duncan?" But there is no

mention of a happy six weeks in Sutherlandshire where we were chiefly fed by the guests "killing" of the daily trout, proudly displayed at even upon a large tray in the hall.

I think it was here that Joe had trudged for three hours up a mountain with his fly-rod set up, to find—when he reached the tarn at the top—that his top joint had fallen off on the road; as he was alone only the midges heard his remarks, for he had not even his fourteen-year old son with him—the happy companion of his later angling days. It was into just such a tarn, that that boy fell off the boat one day, when landing a trout, and was advised by his father to run about in the natural state on the moor while his clothes dried on a sun-baked rock.

A lovely place is Inchnadamph on blue Loch Assynt; the great mountain that guards the valley towards Lochinver can be golden in the long, northern twilight, when the water that has been as a sapphire before the sun-set, becomes purple in the gloaming; but oh! the midges! Useless to tie our heads in bags and grease our faces: they penetrated everywhere and "bit like dogs." They *almost* deterred Joe from his evening hour on the water because of the landing afterwards, when the pony would not stand for him to step into the cart.

But nothing really deterred Joe from fly-fishing—neither heat nor cold nor rain nor wind; he only regarded the weather at those times from the point of view of its influence on the sport. Even when it was too bad for fishing he couldn't keep away from the water. But he could never keep away

from water—he said it was the life of a landscape as the blood is the life of the human body. In our early days, when we were too poor for Highland trips, visits to friends on the Thames afforded him his best access to it ; and, though he was not perhaps a perfect oarsman, as may be proved by a “stroke’s” petition that he would not “go so deep,” to which he replied : “Ah, I never leave a stone unturned !” —he loved the “noble river.” Though for perfect satisfaction he chose more swiftly running waters.

I came across some passages in one of Stopford Brooke’s letters which strangely call to mind Joe’s passion for a free stream.

“There is no companion like a quick stream,” writes the older man ; “full, but not too full, capable of shallows and water-breaks, with deep pools when it likes and with a thousand shadows acquainted with all the tales of the hills. . . .”

And once more : “Running water surely is the dearest and best-bred thing in the world. And a great workman and a great artist . . . Nor is there any Singer, any Poet, any Companion so near and dear as it is when it shapes itself into a mountain stream in a quiet country.”

Often have I seen Joe beside such streams, and though it so chanced that the last happy holiday we had together was spent beside lakes rather than rivers, the sense of moving water remains associated in my mind with him through all the earlier days of our life.

It was in Ireland—his motherland, though he had never seen it till then—that we passed those last unforgettable weeks of autumn.

Even as we landed at Rosslare there seemed to fall upon him an unnameable affinity with the country of his blood ; as we travelled slowly—very slowly—over her truly emerald bosom, he sat in a dream watching the little black cattle, that we afterwards learnt to beware of for “cross bastes,” as they cropped the sedgy meadows, his eyes wandering from them to the tender Irish sky and then waking into fun as he saw a peasant at a small station trip a boy up unawares and cuff him soundly, laughing as he did it.

And when we reached Waterford—only a dirty town to me—he plunged at once among his people and laughed joyously at the retort of a begging urchin, whose pathetic plea of hunger he had pretended to rail at : “That’s where ye’re wrong, yer honour,” the cheery little villain had cried : “A man may be fat and hungry too.”

The horse races were going on, and the inn was in an uproar, which he sat up most of the night to watch.

But the next day sleepy ways prevailed once more, and it took us a long time to get off at the station, where I recollect his amusement at the porter’s instruction : “This way to America.”

We reached Killarney without trunks, and the conveyance sent to meet us broke down on the way to the hotel ; but he would meet no *contretemps* save with a smile, and it was borne in on me that it was because he was an Irishman that Italian happy-go-luckiness had never ruffled him. So we fell in with the leisurely ways of the land, and were fain to “enjoy the soft rain” at that romantic spot and

watch for the beautiful shapes of the hills to appear out of the mists on the lake.

Next morning, however, that unique green-blue sky, washed with rain and dappled with wisps of cloud, smiled on us in faint sunshine, and from that hour our journey was one passing from fair to fairer scenes.

In a short time our train was climbing, or burrowing, through perilous cliffs of granite, crowned with lonely moors and, presently swooping down on the glorious coast-line, that makes for Valencia Island.

This we left on one side, and at Lough Caragh we also did not halt, tempting as it was; for our destination was Waterville, where we had rooms booked at the charming Great Southern Hotel for the fishing season; and after an hour or so more of leisurely travel we reached Cahirciveen, where a ramshackle trap waited to carry us over the moors to the village that lies twixt sea and lough.

The whole journey, and the last of it not least, was a revelation to him of which I think he was proud to talk to me, and I certainly had formed no notion of the beauties of *The Kingdom of Kerry*. The rough road across the wild heather-moor was bordered almost continuously with hedges of the small purple-red fuchsia in full bloom, and the cabins—white or pink-washed, with thatched roofs—that we passed at rare intervals, were shaded with it and covered with honeysuckle.

“You live in a fair country,” said Joe to an old man standing one day at the door of his tiny hovel; and I—looking beyond him to the dim range of the

Macgillicuddy Reeks—added, “and with beautiful hills.”

“The visitors say ’tis fair, but I’ve seen it *arl* me life,” replied the proprietor, with a quaint smile. And then to me—“but sure the Reeks are illigant in winter wi’ the darlin’ snaws upon them.”

But that was later. That day we were silent with contented fatigue till the muffled boom of the great Atlantic breakers began to fall as distant thunder on our ears: then suddenly Ballinskelligs’ Bay lay before us with the massive headlands of Bolus and Hog’s Head guarding it from the Ocean.

The shore is wild and desolate with the sense of the vast Atlantic ever present; but soon we turned inland again towards the mountains of the “deep Glenmore,” and there, under the purple shadow of Mount Knockaline, lay a long, grave Lough with a tiny deserted islet in its midst upon which one of the ancient beehive cells stands under the eaves of a ruined church. It is Lough Currane, and we drove under overhanging fuchsias, to the Great Southern Hotel on its shore.

We had two more beautiful drives while we were in the *Kingdom of Kerry*: one along the perilous Irish *Cornice*, known as the Coomakista Pass, where one prayed one might not meet the coach, to Park-na-Silla; the other from Kenmare over a rocky road to Glengariff.

The Cornice drive beggars description, and I never knew Joe to be so enthusiastic over a view. Shallow little coves fringed with brilliant golden seaweed—upon which herons stand feeding at times—indent the shore itself; but the Sound is studded

with numberless islets—some clad with heather, others with semi-tropical shrubs, and faintly ringed with the silver foam of a streaked and gentle sea. In an opal haze beyond them, the opposite shore of County Cork lies as a dream ; but the two great guardian cliffs of Ballinskelligs' Bay with their outriders—the Bull and Cow Rocks—stand in firm and grand outline away whence we came where the Sound joins the Ocean.

The coach driver draws up when he reaches the best point, and tells us all about it, and points out the Great Skellig Rock—twelve miles out to sea, and close at hand the bridle path by which O'Connell rode over the mountains to his home at Darrynane. As we near that Bay and its multitude of tiny islets, upon one of which stands the ruined Monastery of St. Finnan, he shews us the "Liberator's" very house and then we turn inland again among undulating moors—our road fenced with the fuchsia and every variety of fern, till of a sudden the beautiful bridge and square church tower of Sneem village seem to beckon us into the very heart of a fiery sunset.

Our second drive from Kenmare was again quite different and not without incident. In the first place Irish unpunctuality caused us to start two hours late, and in the second, when the carriage arrived at last, the harness had to be tied up with cord before we could proceed, a beginning which filled me with alarm though it reminded me of youthful days in Italy : but to Joe it only afforded opportunity for pleasant raillery with his compatriot, and I only wish I could remember all the *bon-mots* with which they capped one another.

The last part of the ascent was very wild, but when we emerged from the tunnel that pierces the topmost granite cliff, the view that burst upon us—though wild still in its freedom from the intrusion of human interest, was soft and tender with all the glamour of the South. Range upon range of finely-chiselled hills stood crossing and re-crossing one another with gentle valleys between, and the glint of water here and there made visible by the golden splash of sunset; and presently the hills—so soft and so solemn upon the mellow evening sky—were cleft to their base, and Bantry Bay lay spread in the distance beneath us.

The road went down in sharp turns and, the driver cheerfully remarking that we should have to pass a motor-roller on the way, my heart jumped into my mouth. But Joe administered a little salutary chaff together with a cup of tea at the wayside inn, where we changed drivers, and a pretty girl assured me that “Faith,” I had “no need to fear, for the lad was the coolest whip on arl the mountain-side.”

So he was, but he went a fine pace, and the waiter at the inn, who told us he was the girl’s brother, told us also that that cool lad was her lover, so perhaps he was eager to show his prowess.

At Glengariff our weather was hot and fine, and the water of that land-locked end of the Bay was so calm that the pleasure boats round the jetty, and indeed every tree on the shore and on the near island, would lie reflected on its surface in the rosy dawns or the golden sunsets as they do on the Italian lakes. But out beyond the island the breeze

would freshen, and thither Joe hied him with a friendly fisherman every morning to lie in wait for the bass and the mackerel.

Our friends—Mr. and Mrs. Annan Bryce—owned the beautiful island at the mouth of the bay, and there we spent happy afternoons wandering over the heather and gazing afar from the old castle's ruined battlements ; but Joe's mornings were his own, and he would go even further out to sea than the island, to where the seals sunned themselves on the rocks, unscared by the approach of man, but scuttling under water when the fishing-reel ran out, the old ones calling their young to safety with an eerie cry.

Perhaps Glengariff was the most lovely spot that we saw, but the hothouse atmosphere of it made a prolonged stay too trying, hence we enjoyed Water-ville and Lough Currane best, where the more invigorating air of the open Atlantic in our wake kept even the moisture of the valleys freshened with soft breezes.

Also it is here that Joe rejoiced in the only branch of angling that he really loved ; sunshine, mist or rain he was off on the lough with his faithful gillie, his trout-rod set up, his old hat well-adorned with every likely fly and, if necessary, his oilskins about him.

It took him all his time—easy as it usually was with him to make friends—to make them with that gillie : a curiously sad and silent lad, whose rage at the “lack of pride” in a besotted old poacher who would hang about the landing-stage, knew no bounds.

But Joe would only laugh, and give the old beggar the "tanner" that he begged "for the love of God," with a willing heart.

"Don't be too hard on him," he would say to the young boatman. But the boy had been in America, and, as it presently appeared, was ashamed of the lazy ways of his countrymen.

"Home Rule might be arl right," he would say—adding shrewdly—"if it don't keep the visitors" (generally meaning the English) "away. But, begorra, let us work for it!"

Few held such wide views even in that day, and Joe could rarely get any one to talk on that favourite topic of his; but he made various pleasant little discoveries, one of which was that Catholic and Protestant children worked together at school without trouble; but then most of the latter were fathered by English experts working at the Cable Station and were ranked as "visitors."

His chief enjoyment when not fishing, was in the cabins—when he could find excuse for entrance. There was a weaver of the frieze not far from our inn, and there we went to buy a length for a gift. We were rewarded for a wet walk. The weaver was out—but his wife sat by the peat-fire with a new-born baby in her arms.

As we opened the door the cow that was in the yard thrust in a soft nose to hold it ajar, and lo, we beheld a sow within, rise slowly up and waddle out, followed by ten wee sucking pigs: then the cow stepped over the threshold beside us.

The woman rose asking us our errand, while I edged away from the cow and tried to get out again.

“ She’ll not harm ye, lady,” said she with a smile, “ It’s her milkin’ time, and sure she knows I’d not take the darlin’ babe out in the rain.”

But it was not often that Joe spared time from serious business for calling and sight-seeing. Once we went to the Cable Station and learned, in an amazing short time, from America, that the weather was fine and dry ; and on two occasions I went with him to Lough Coppul (The Horse) away up in the “ deep Glenmore ” ; but that was only allowed so that I might see the sleepy beauty of that tiny, lonely lake, where the water is peat-brown even in the sunlight ; here I was introduced to two lovely children with gold-red hair and deep eyes, who dwelt in the schoolhouse of four districts, and were Joe’s special friends. This treat was a great favour granted to me, nor was I admitted into the boat even then, but had to roam about the shores while work was done. Luckily it was fine and warm, and the midges are not nearly so fierce in Ireland ; and, with the children’s tales of the plights of scholars coming over the mountains in winter and a shy admission, warily coaxed out of them, as to the presence of fairy horsemen there on All Hallowe’en, many an hour went by like a dream, till the gloaming called us home.

But my lot was more often to sit reading or writing on the terrace of the hotel watching for the boats to round the point of *Church Island*, as they came in with their catch to meals.

Whether anglers are men or women—and most of the women in the Hotel were anglers—they mind nothing but meals, and rarely the *hours* of those ;

so that I was mostly alone, but the excitement of the "basket" was an event each time, and Joe's was often the heaviest.

Through the gap in the fuchsia hedge, whose tassels lay blood-red upon the lough's blue background on a fine morning, I would first distinguish his boat in the offing, and walk down to the landing-stage to watch it nearing me between the shallows, where those coal-black little "cross" bullocks stood knee-deep on the emerald marshland. I can see him, skilfully throwing his line on the water to the last instant; then turning towards me with the welcoming smile on his face always, though I generally knew, before he had stepped ashore, whether he had had good luck or not.

Yet the weather was not by any means always fine, and many a day I sat in our little parlour, not even seeing the fuchsia hedge, and certainly not the water.

One wet day comes specially to my mind. It had rained steadily, and out of the soft, white mist that shrouded the lough, the sound of a tolling bell had come eerily to me all the afternoon. I knew of no church within two miles save the ruined one on the Island, and at last I asked the chambermaid what it might mean.

"Sure, it'll be a buryin' on St. Finnan's Isle," said she, crossing herself, after listening for a minute. "The family will still have the right of it, and they keep a bell in the broken tower. But the corpse will have come from far, poor sowl!"

She went her way, and soon the bell ceased, and almost at the same time the mist began to clear and

the shapes of the black cattle to appear again on the sedgy marshes, browsing as usual; then I saw black boats—like phantom things—stealing away in the distance and—behind them—a streak of gold struck across the wet mountain-side and all the mist shrank away, and the purple ridge was set against that tender blue-green Irish sky, crossed with bars of rosy light.

I went out and down the wet path to the landing-stage, and there was Joe's boat pulling towards the shore, and he standing up in it with a smile upon his face.

* * * * *

That was our last holiday.

We were often out of London again, and in lovely spots: in summer, at Studland in Dorset, at Broadway and Burford in Oxon, at Ditchling in Sussex; in winter, at Hastings and Bournemouth. But it was always in search of health and to escape the nerve-racking air-raids of War—never again in the boyish spirit of holiday.

Yet let it not be supposed that Joe was ever dismal. "Comyns Carr is a good fellow and a boon fellow," George Meredith wrote of him to another old friend, and so he was to the last. Depressed now and then, but hopeful again till near the end, and always thankful for every bright moment and for every kindness received. "Grumbling is so dull," he would say; and when I was dismayed at the *contretemps* of travel lest they should affect his comfort, he would beg me to "bridge it over"—as he did.

As we drove away from the house at Bournemouth on our last journey he said to the landlady : " I've never been so comfortable in any lodgings " ; yet he had suffered much there, and had often lacked luxuries unprocurable in war-time. Sometimes in those days, after a long silence, I would ask him what he was thinking of, and he would answer simply : " Nothing, dear ! " By which I am sure he meant nothing troublous—and truly to the wearying, harassing thoughts which beset many of us he was a stranger—for he would sometimes add : " I've plenty to remember."

And then, to the last, he worked part of every day. His hand had not been able to write for long, but he would dictate to a shorthand typist ; the whole of his *Ideals of Painting*, posthumously published, was so written, and his precision never flagged, as he instructed me over the correction of those proofs—whether in regard to the letterpress or to the re-production of the illustrations ; the photo-gravure after Rembrandt's *Mill* had been delayed, and on the last day of his life he asked me if it had come and if it " looked well."

Reading over his own words upon the waning of his old friend, Sir John Millais' life, they seem to me unconsciously, yet so fitly, to describe himself, that I shall end this effort to preserve some sort of a portrait of him by quoting them.

" I never heard from him," he writes, " however great the dejection of spirit he must have suffered, a single sour word concerning life or nature. His outlook on the world was never tainted by self-compassion, never clouded by any bitterness of

personal experience, and one came to recognise then—as his life and strength gradually failed and waned—that the spirit of optimism . . . was indeed a beauty deeply resident in his character, which even the shadow of coming death was powerless to cloud or darken.”

So I think of Joe as he stepped out of the boat on Currane, with the smile upon his face.

I here add a few unpublished early lyrics and sonnets, never revised by my husband for publication, which may give pleasure to his friends of those days.

LOVE'S SUMMER.

AWAY in our far Northern Land,
Where blustering winds swept o'er the wold,
Love came with Winter hand in hand
Changing our leaden skies to gold,
And as we raced across the Snow,
Love set the frozen world aglow.

Ah, give me back that frozen year,
Those leaden skies, that wind swept wold !
'Twas summer then, 'tis winter here,
Here where my dearest heart is cold,
Where all the Earth and all the Sun,
Tell only that Love's race is run.

J. C. C.

1870.

A SONG.

I.

WHAT need of words, when lips that might have
spoken

Clung close to mine ?

And through the shadowed silence long unbroken,
This hand in thine,

There came from lowered lids such speech as lingers
When Love grows dumb,

And muted strings yield up to unseen fingers
Sweet strains to come.

II.

BUT now ! Ah now ! what love left half-unheeded
Or half untold,

Each little word those quivering lips conceded
Has turned to gold.

I hoard them all as misers hoard their treasure
In secret store,

Till once again Love finds that muted measure
As once before.

J. C. C.

FOR MUSIC.

O winged Love ! bear those red lips to mine,
That at one draught together we may drain
This Cup of Life that holds Love's magic wine,
Then turn with lip to lip and drink again,
O Winged Love !

Or waft me as a rose to where she lies
And hide me with thy hands within her breast.
That my bruised petals, wakened by her sighs,
May live one hour, then cease, and sink to rest,
O Winged Love !

J. C. C.

1873.

LINES WRITTEN ON A PAGE OF A YOUNG
GIRL'S ALBUM

AT RAGATZ, AUGUST 1889.

JUST as a dream of music never heard
May charm our spirit with its mystic spell,
This little page without one written word
Speaks more than words can tell :

Fair as the unchanging fields of Alpine snow,
That hide the buried and the unborn spring,
Its silence guards all secrets that we know
And all that time may bring :

Bearing sweet memories of past hours held dear
For all whose youth is flying, or has flown,
And softly whispering in a maiden's ear
A name as yet unknown.

J. C. C.

My love is fair and yet not made so fair
As though fed only with the sun and sky
For now some viewless vision fills the air
And laughing lips grow mute—she knows not why,
And on her eyelids fallen unaware
The shadow as of passing tears doth lie !
Of tears unwept, born of an unknown care
That dwells beyond the flight of memory.

Ah, sweet, into thy beauty there could come
No better thing : the earth that holds thy feet
Must bring earth's stain upon them where they meet
The path not made for thee—and the wind's
breath

That speaks not unto others but is dumb,
Whispers to thee of Life and Love and Death.

J. C. C.

1875.

ON A PICTURE.

BY E. BURNE-JONES.

SAD swift return of old love unforgot,
And passion of sweet lips that may not meet,
And trembling eyes that, like to weary feet,
Press close unto the goal yet touch it not,
Ah ! Love, what hinders unto these the lot
Of common lovers ? Shall no hour complete
This sweetness half-begun, no new day greet
The old love freed of the old stain and blot ?

At this last hour, O Death, within thy heart
Hast thou no pity ? Shall the night be dumb
Nor ever from thy lips the low words come,
Giving once more the old sweet wanderings ?
Shall yearning lips for ever stand apart
Shadowed beneath the darkness of thy wings ?

J. W. C. C.

1872.

THERE was a time, Love, when I strove to tell
Our love but newly won : and tried to sing
In broken verse that scarcely found a wing
Some praise of all the beauty that doth dwell
Beneath long lashes : But then came the spell
Of love possessed, and I no more dared bring,—
Thy hand in mine,—the old verse offering
Lest any spoken word should sound ‘farewell.’

SONG at the best is but a cry for love
Not love itself and ere our paths had met
We cried to one another through the maze
That men call life :—until the moon above—
Our steadfast moon of love that’s not yet set—
Had drawn our feet into the selfsame ways.

J. C. C.

July, 1878.

AH ! Love, I know thou hast no power to bring
Those lips once more to my lips ; those sweet eyes,
Back to where once they dreamed so near to
mine.—

I know that not again on Earth shall cling
Those fair white arms, and not till all Time dies
Shall these hands in her loosened hair entwine.
There is no might can give back to the Spring
The lowliest flower dead under summer skies.

Yet thou can'st tell me wandering by what stream
And in what fields of night her white feet tread.
Have I not wandered, Love, in many a dream ?
Has she not too in dreaming wanderèd ?
Then send her soul now to some garden fair
That my soul too may meet and wander there.

J. W. C. C.

THE moon that leans o'er yonder fleecy lawn
Lights a white path where wandering souls may
stray

From earth as high as heaven : and when the day
Shall pass night's dusky curtains, newly-drawn,
And swiftly with the footing of a fawn
Leaps up, from cloud to cloud, till all the gray
Burns crimson—then our feet may find a way
From East to West led by the feet of dawn.

Yet now how far apart stand North and South
And that one face and mine ! Ah, not so far !
For at the call of one remembered word
I hear again that voice which first I heard
When day dawned in the smile about her mouth
And in her eyes I saw the morning Star.

J. C. C.

1873.

DEATH speaks one word and all Love's speech is
dumb

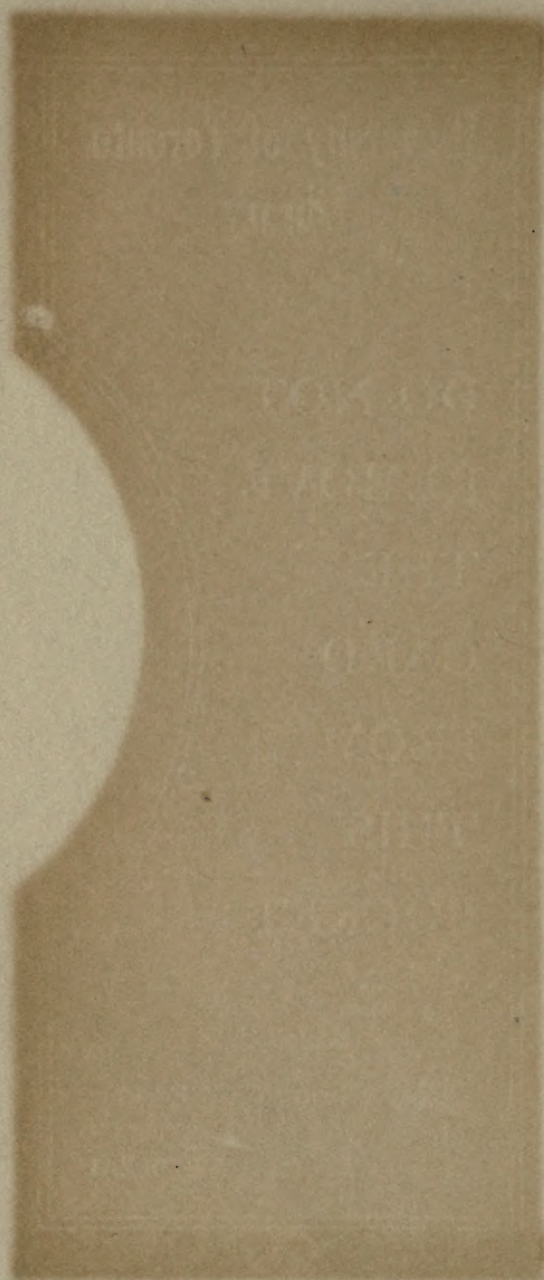
And on Love's parted lips that breathe farewell
Death's marble finger lays its mystic spell
And bears the unuttered message to the tomb,
From whose closed door no whispered echoes come
To break the discord of the tolling bell
That sounds through city lane and woodland dell
With the sad burthen of Love's martyrdom.

And so Love dies. Ah no ! it is not so !

For locked in Death's white arms Love lies secure
In changeless sleep that knows no dream of change.
'Tis Life not Death that works Love's overthrow,
For while Life lasts what love is safe or sure
When each day tells of passionate hearts grown
strange ?

J. C. C.

1890.



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